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THE CHIEF CORNER-STONE

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ESSAYS TOWARDS AN EXPOSITION OF
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH FOR TO-DAY

EDITED BY

W. T. DAVISON, M.A., D.D.

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THE CHIEF CORNER-STONE

ESSAYS TOWARDS AN EXPOSITION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH FOR TO-DAY

INTRODUCTION

THE emphasis in the title of this volume rests upon its last word—to-day. Christ has been from the beginning the 'Corner-Stone' in the structure of individual Christian character and in the up-building of the faith and life of the Church. It may be said that the Christian faith needs no new exposition; it may also be said that it needs fresh exposition in every generation. Both statements are true, and they are easily reconciled by those who believe that a faith which does not change in its essential features needs a continually renewed rendering in terms of the changing vocabulary and changing habits of thought that mark every new century and epoch. That some periods of history make great and clamant demands for such restatement, whilst in others comparatively little need of it is felt, is a fact too obvious to require comment.

It is generally recognized that our own age is

one in which changes of thought have taken place with unexampled rapidity. Many of these touch religion directly and very closely, whilst the influence of others is not necessarily small because it is indirect and less obvious.

The rise and steady progress of Biblical Criticism—that is, the careful and scientific study of the records of the Old and New Testaments, viewed as literature and in their historical bearings—is one of these. The discoveries of Biblical archaeology, the improved knowledge of Bible history, and even more, the rise and growth of the Comparative Study of Religions, have produced changes in the mode of regarding Christianity which are best appreciated by professed students, but which are becoming more and more patent to the plain man who thinks of these things. The advance of physical science, the acceptance in some form of evolution as a permanent factor in the history of mankind as well as in biology, the ripening of psychology as a science, and the light shed by philosophy generally on the processes and operations of the human mind, have greatly influenced men's ideas of religion. In consequence, the hold of religion on human nature has been deeply affected. It has not indeed been weakened; it has probably been strengthened; but the changes indicated have made it impossible to set forth the nature and claims of Christianity precisely in the old way.

Considerations such as these have become the commonplaces of discussion. But the effect of them has been very various. Some have rushed to the conclusion that an entire reconstruction of Christianity as a religious system is necessary if it is to retain its hold on the modern mind. Not only are many of its specific doctrines now considered to be untenable, but it is said that the very foundations on which it rests have been undermined, that substructures, as well as superstructures, are untrustworthy. Some Christian 'apologists,' in their anxiety to meet modern Rationalism, have discarded one article of the creed after another till their 'minimized' and attenuated Christianity has lost its distinctive characteristics, and a pale, ghostly Theism alone remains, which hardly possesses vitality enough to inspire religious faith. Others—evangelical believers and teachers—are thoroughly alarmed, and dread the advance of 'modernism' in all its forms. They have persuaded themselves that it is their duty to resist the introduction of what is called the 'thin end of the wedge,' and that to make the slightest concession to the arrogant assumptions of those who have pulled the Bible to pieces and done their best to undermine the authority of Christ is fatal to all true reverence and faith. They would have the Christian Church close its eyes against the 'criticism' which lays sacrilegious hands on the ark of God, and they appear unwilling to

accept any new knowledge that seems to be inconsistent with the beliefs that their fathers held, as if the only safety lay in holding fast by the lines of traditional belief as it was held a century ago.

The contributors to the present volume hold neither of these extreme positions. They are all ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, loyal to the evangelical message which in the eighteenth century did so much to rehabilitate religion in this country. But they do not believe, they strenuously refuse to acknowledge, that it is impossible to harmonize the Christian doctrines of salvation with the modern outlook. They hold that no discoveries have been made or principles established, in the course of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth, which make it necessary to modify the cardinal doctrines of Christianity as they are recorded in the New Testament, and as they have been brought home with new power by Wesley and a long line of faithful followers in succeeding generations. This message they hold as a sacred trust, one which, with mind as well as heart, they strive to deliver, to preserve, and to hand on to the generation following.

But they recognize a clear distinction between the substance of evangelical faith and the theological expression of a number of doctrines that have gathered round it. They recognize the duty of admitting the light of truth from whatever quarter

it enters. They rejoice to perceive in how many ways new knowledge, which at first seemed to rob the Christian believer of cherished ideas, has immensely enriched the content of the old faith and unspeakably enlarged the outlook of the Church upon the world. They believe that new knowledge, generation after generation, is bound to interfere with some venerable traditional opinions, and that it is the will of God that the thoughts of men should be 'widened with the process of the suns.' Under these conditions, while it is the duty of teachers to be tender towards the faith of every simple-minded, true-hearted believer, they have no less a duty to the younger generation, more or less highly educated, who have grown up in the atmosphere of new knowledge and who demand answers to questions which press upon them in a way unknown to our fathers. It has been thought that such a volume as the present might tend at the same time to reassure those who are afraid lest the old faith should be endangered by the new knowledge, and those who are jealous lest the new knowledge should be stifled by the old faith.

Precisely what is meant by these very general expressions cannot be stated in detail in a few lines, nor even in a volume. It is impossible to define such words as Criticism so as to include all critics, or Modernism so as to include all modernists; just as no definition has yet been devised of

Mysticism or Socialism, which would satisfactorily include all socialists or mystics. In relation to the Bible, for example, it is obvious that there are critics *and* critics, differing from one another by a whole diameter; but the measure of diversity observable does not interfere with the belief that criticism, in the sense of careful examination of the Bible, is not only valid, but necessary, and that assured results have been attained by reasonable criticism, using sound methods. There is danger here as elsewhere of accepting novelty for novelty's sake and of rashly building into the structure of doctrine crude materials that will render the walls perishable—wood, hay, stubble, instead of gold, silver, and precious stones. The so-called 'restoration' of an ancient cathedral may be only a piece of destructive vandalism; and no architect can lay down specific rules for a work which demands expert knowledge and infinite patience, as well as delicate sympathy and carefully cultivated taste.

So with the relations between religion and modern thought in the departments of science and philosophy. No one can precisely define these relations. The currents of contemporary thought rush rapidly forwards, and the 'views of God and the world' which are taken by religious men are modified almost before they are aware of it. But religious teachers are rightly called upon from time to time to declare where they stand. Some-

times they are called to show cause why they give hospitality and welcome to modern ideas, even when venerable traditions are interfered with. Sometimes, on the other hand, it becomes a duty to show that assertions made are those of science 'falsely so called,' which needs to be distinguished from true science, just as the hasty utterances or one-sided formulae of individual or denominational theologians need to be distinguished from the great verities of the Catholic faith. Time effects a certain process of sifting, but all Christian teachers are called on to assist in it. Gains as well as losses are discernible as the generations pass, and few candid observers of our times can fail to recognize the gains that have been won for faith in breadth and power and stability, coinciding with the undeniable loss of an earlier and simpler, because unchallenged, confidence in the creeds of the past.

. . . . .

The present volume is obviously but a small contribution to meet a need which it is easier to recognize than to satisfy. Its aim is not 'apologetic,' nor 'critical,' but it seeks to be constructive. The problem is a pressing one for the churches—how to preserve the older and the newer elements of the faith in their true proportions—discarding only that which is decaying, waxing old, and ready to vanish away, and admitting into the storehouse of things new and old only that which

is excellent, stable, and of abiding worth. No attempt is made in this book to cover the whole ground of Christian doctrine, and space has not been available to allow any writer to argue his own case at length. The essays are not treatises, but brief discussions of great themes. It is hoped, however, that enough is here said to make clear the general attitude that is adopted, and the methods by which the relation of the evangelical believer to important current questions may be determined. Only a few subjects are specifically handled. It cannot be too clearly stated that no attempt is made to cover the whole area of Christian doctrine. But the titles of the essays show that regard has been paid to such cardinal questions as the Inspiration and Authority of the Bible; the Fatherhood of God; the Person, Work, and Authority of the Lord Jesus Christ; the work of the Holy Spirit; Miracles; the Meaning and Value of Christian Experience; and the Relation of Religion to Philosophy and Science. It has not been the aim of the writers to formulate detailed conclusions, so much as to show the spirit in which fidelity to both old and new truth may be preserved.

As is usual in such works of collaboration, neither the editor, nor any contributor, is responsible for anything beyond his own immediate work. None the less, the writers concur in the

main with the principles laid down in this Introduction, and in the general spirit and aims of the volume. It has not been found possible to secure as much personal interchange of opinion on details as would have been desirable. Busy men, living far apart, cannot often arrange to meet one another for more than a passing conversation. The editor, in consultation with the several writers, has striven as far as possible to co-ordinate the various parts of the work, to prevent both repetitions and inconsistencies, and to repair any serious omissions or gaps between the different subjects. But each writer has uttered his own thoughts in his own way, and coincidences or divergencies of expression have been allowed to stand with little modification.

One name is absent from the list of contributors, representing a loss that has been keenly felt by all. The late Dr. James Chapman took a deep interest in the present publication, and was to have contributed an essay on the Authority of the Church. His wide culture, his fine spirit, his delicate insight and well-balanced judgement, combined with other qualities to fit him in an eminent degree for the work that is here undertaken. The readers of the book, as well as its writers, are left sadly the poorer by his lamented removal.

. . . . .

A somewhat serious responsibility rests upon ministers in any church who venture thus to put

forth in concert what are at best only individual opinions on grave questions round which controversy is still rife. Some readers of this book may consider that it opens the door incautiously to dangerous innovations; others may find fault because the door is not opened more widely to admit new and fruitful ideas. Whatever the responsibility may be, the writers of the essays are content to bear it for one sufficient reason—under present circumstances it seemed the greater responsibility to be silent. Nothing but a strong sense of duty has induced them to speak, and they have done so hoping that even so slight a volume as this may not be without benefit in these days of transition to ministers and laymen in the Church to which they belong, and possibly to a wider circle of evangelical believers in the larger Church of Christ outside.

W. T. D.

I

REVELATION AND AUTHORITY

W. T. Davison, M.A., D.D.

In all departments of thought and life the question of authority is fundamental—vital. It means, What is truth, and how is it to be ascertained? What is right, how is it to be determined, and whence comes the obligation to obey it? It means, Is there a norm, a standard for thought and action, and how is the common acceptance of such standard to be secured?

Yet few words are less acceptable in the ears of the present generation. Our age has been described as one of rebellion against all authority. This is an obvious exaggeration, but it would not be going too far to say that the present age is one in which all kinds of authority are questioned and challenged, the grounds on which each rests are ruthlessly examined, and every kind of claim to exercise authority is made to give an account of itself. For better, for worse, there has been a general relaxation of time-honoured ties, and conflict has arisen over fundamental principles hitherto taken for granted in relation to class, sex, nation, and race. The restlessness, passing into revolt, so characteristic of the time, springs from many causes: sometimes from 'divine discontent,' sometimes from discontent that is anything but divine. In politics, in society, in science, in

philosophy, in art, in religion, foundations are being disturbed. Such unrest may portend disintegration and decay ; it may be only a symptom of incipient growth. The present writer fully and firmly believes that the latter is the case. In proportion as it is true, one may watch without tremor the removal of the things that can be shaken, in order that those which cannot be shaken may the more securely remain.

But such confidence is anything but universal. Uncertainty and lack of assurance, where formerly was unquestioning acceptance, are causing in many minds bewilderment and fear. Yet it cannot be said that the refuge is being sought in authority. The very word is objectionable in many ears. It is personal, external, coercive. The assertion of authority has too often ended in detestable tyrannies, and of all such tyrannies the ecclesiastical have proved the most formidable, the most hateful, and the least defensible. In the course of history, periods of equable acquiescence in existing order have been followed by periods of uneasiness, defiance, and revolt ; old grounds of confidence have been disturbed until new and more satisfactory ones could be attained. Whether the process is rightly carried out or not largely depends upon the view taken of authority. What is needed, however much the idea be resented, is guidance, leadership, control of the right kind ; where these are not adequately forthcoming disastrous consequences follow. 'Where no vision is,' said the wise man of old, 'the people cast off restraint' (R.V.), 'perish' (A.V.). The two translations are two ways of saying the same thing.

Such revolt as has been described does not necessarily tend to anarchy. The element of

truth and justice in the contentions of the supposed rebels is that they are acting in the interests of self-direction, autonomy, freedom. They have every right so to protest, and the value of their protest should be examined. The mistake lies in supposing that liberty and authority, whether in the region of thought or of action, are essentially opposed to one another, and that the advocate of freedom must be right because 'fredome is a nobill thing, it makyth man to have liking.' The motto of the average Anglo-Saxon is, 'I won't be dictated to.' He is right, unless he can find that true Dictator whose word of authority may not only be acquiesced in, but eagerly welcomed, because it leads the way to abiding enfranchisement. Law is one step towards liberty; true liberty moves within the bounds of law. There should be no conflict between freedom and authority. They are the two poles of the magnet, each necessary to the other; the two foci of the ellipse, determining the true line of curvature; or—if so mechanical an illustration be permissible—the two cogged wheels, which turn indeed in opposite directions, but whose interlocking secures the steady and harmonious movement of the whole machine. When centripetal and centrifugal forces are rightly proportioned, the planet swings around the central sun with golden ease.

In Nature, man must obey if he would rule, however painful the process of learning the lesson; Nature tolerates no trifling, and in this case authority brooks no denial. In Art, as Ruskin was never tired of teaching, the best and truest name of liberty is Obedience, 'founded indeed, on a kind of freedom, else it would become mere subjugation; but that freedom is only granted that obedience may be more perfect.'

'The fool, whatever be his wit, is he who doesn't know his master.' Society at its best implies order, which begins with liberty and ends with it, passing from the simplicity of the freedom which accepts authority to the freedom of mastery to which such obedience leads. In all these realms, however, such high ideals are but dimly realized. There is only one kind of service that is perfect freedom.

I

It is within the sphere of religion that authority is most salutary and most complete, yet it is here that difficulties are most constantly raised. If, in the life of religion, there is conflict between control and freedom, it is evident that something is out of gear. The third petition in the Lord's Prayer implies a contrast between heaven and earth, and shows that the only way in which earth can become like heaven is in the perfect fulfilment of the will of God. But assaults are being made more vigorously than ever upon the very principle of authority in religion, and that from all sides. Christian churches are agreed in their efforts to repel the attacks of Agnostics who deny the possibility of any knowledge of the Divine will; of Pantheists, for whom the universe of nature is ultimate; and of Rationalists, who would make each man his own authority. But they have so far differed in the line of defence adopted that the principle of authority has with many been discredited. Its nature and grounds need therefore to be rightly understood.

1. The word 'authority' needs to be defined, an atmosphere having gathered round its use which does not belong to its essential meaning.

If we understand by authority in religion an external power ruling and directing belief and conduct, it must be remembered that, for rational and moral beings, such power must rest on rational and moral grounds appealing to all that is highest and best within a man. Power and right may be combined, but the emphasis lies on the latter. This is the case with ἐξουσία in the New Testament. In Latin, *auctoritas* implies considered judgement, afterwards issuing in weighty decree. Men's questions concern not so much the power which enforces the control as the right by which it is exercised.

To the religious man, the source and fountain of all authority is God. In religious life all authority depends upon the revelation of Himself and His will which the ever-living God has made, and is making, to mankind. For the purposes of this essay the existence of a personal God is taken for granted. Those who deny either that God can be known, or that He can reveal Himself, or who assert that He is not transcendent, only immanent in the universe, or that there is no Personal Spiritual Being with whom the spirit of man can hold communion, must be met on other grounds.[1] Whether the term 'religion' can be properly applied to systems which do not recognize a personal Deity depends on the definition given to the word. Some, in an unduly narrow spirit, have refused the name religion to Buddhism properly understood, and to the system of Spinoza, whom Novalis called 'a God-intoxicated man.' Martineau and others strongly hold that the idea of a 'Divine mind and will ruling the

[1] See, for example, Dr. James Ward's two series of Gifford Lectures, *Naturalism and Agnosticism* (1899) and *Realm of Ends* (1911).

universe and holding moral relations with mankind' is essential to the very idea of religion. Objections raised against the use of the term Person as applied to the Infinite need to be met, and restricted ideas of personality drawn from the experience of men must be laid aside when we speak of the Personality of God. 'Perfect Personality is in God alone' (Lotze). But the word 'authority' can hardly be rightly employed in religion unless it rests upon belief in a Deity who knows and wills and loves, an Infinite Spirit who has brought into being a world of finite spirits capable of entering into relation with Himself, One who can and does reveal Himself sufficiently for men to understand His mind, respond to His care, know and obey His will. The Essential Reality in the universe as we know it is the Father of spirits, the spiritual beings whom He has brought into existence, and the relations between them. Such a Being is the source of all power and the fountain of all truth and righteousness. His authority none can dispute.

2. The Christian believes in such a Being, God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. He believes also that the supreme revelation of God is made in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord. All Christians agree, further, that for them the ultimate source of authority is God in Christ; but they differ as to the proximate source, the seat, the sphere, the channel or vehicle, of such authority in human life and history. These differences, though apparently secondary, vitally affect the views taken of the Christian religion.

The Church of Rome teaches that there is a community upon earth, completely representing and possessing the authority of Christ, virtually a continuation of the Incarnation, infallible and

indefectible like its Master. At the head of the hierarchy of this Church is the Pope, the vicar of Christ, himself now declared to be infallible when speaking *ex cathedrâ*. The Scriptures, together with ecclesiastical traditions of equal weight, possess authority, but the Church is their sole and sufficient custodian and interpreter. No question can arise in the mind of the believer as to what is truth or right; the Church—*semper eadem*—declares now, what it has always declared, the perfect mind of God. An easy solution of a thousand difficulties—if only it were true!

The Reformers of the sixteenth century repudiated the ecclesiastical claims which had been steadily increasing and strengthening for a thousand years. Their protest was made in the name of conscience against crying moral abuses, in the name of faith against a Christian legalism and formalism as oppressive as that of any Scribes and Pharisees, in the name of reason over against superstition, and of freedom against intolerable and apparently irremediable tyranny. Professor Lindsay has shown afresh, in his masterly discussion of the religious principles inspiring the Reformation,[1] that Luther's original protest was purely religious, based upon incontrovertible personal experience. His appeal to the word of God meant a supreme confidence in the gospel of Christ. He cast off the old authority because, and in so far as, he had found emancipation through the message of the gospel. He stood fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free. But the new liberty brought its own law. He exultingly submitted to the authority of the word of God which had brought him freedom, and to

[1] *History of the Reformation*, vol. i. book ii. ch. viii. pp. 426 foll.

the Bible as His living word. But he meant not so much the canonized book, as the message of salvation it contained. He found a Bible within the Bible, and his whole soul bowed in adoration before the authority not of certain documents, but of God-in-Christ, of grace, made his own by indubitable experience.

This basis was obviously subjective. It proved insufficient for Melanchthon and Calvin and their successors in formulating a creed. By them the supreme authority of the Bible as a book was assumed rather than proved, and the doctrines of the Reformed Churches were established on the basis of the canonical Scriptures. The first Helvetic Confession (1536) expressly states that the Holy Scriptures are 'the word of God, given by the Holy Ghost,' and that they 'alone contain perfectly all piety and the whole rule of life.' But on what grounds was the Bible believed to be the word of God? As an external standard, canonized and made sacred by the Church? The Reformers could not be satisfied with such an answer. The real proof, they said, was found in the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*, the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer, the same Spirit who inspired the word furnishing the assurance to the faithful that it came from God Himself. Such a position was also open to the objection that it was too subjective, that it would appeal only to some people, and apply only to certain parts of Scripture. Consequently in the post-Reformation period a high doctrine of inspiration was accepted, which made the whole Bible, as it now stands, to be the literal word of God in all its parts, every word having been written as if by the finger of God Himself, including even the vowel-points added to the text at a

late date by the Massoretes. The Westminster Confession, in noble language which it would have been a pleasure to quote at length, dwells rather upon 'the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine . . . the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation,' as arguments whereby we know the Bible to be the word of God. 'Yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.'

The position of the Anglican Church is not easy to define, because that Church does not speak with one uniform voice. In the sixth Article it is declared that 'Holy Scripture containeth all things that are necessary to salvation.' In the twentieth we read that 'the Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith—and yet it is not lawful to ordain anything that is contrary to God's word written'; so that, while the Church is 'a witness and keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree anything against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation.' An influential section of the Church of England, however, perhaps at present predominant among the clergy, exalts the authority of an ill-defined 'catholic tradition,' and interprets articles, creeds, worship, and church-order only in accordance with it.

In the modern period individualistic tendencies have asserted themselves against what has been called 'Protestant scholasticism.' The Rationalism of the eighteenth century contributed to this assault. Devout souls, in anything but a rationalistic spirit, have exalted the Inner Light as the

main authority for the Christian believer. The Society of Friends, in their insistence upon the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit, have emphasized the Divine revelation as given to the individual soul, rejecting the 'means' of ministry and sacraments, and to some extent of the Bible. Our own day has witnessed a remarkable revival of mysticism. Auguste Sabatier is only one example of a school that opposes religions of authority to religions of the spirit, virtually claiming independence of all 'external authority' whatsoever.

These modern tendencies have been intensified by the growth of new knowledge. The spirit of man, we are told, has at last been emancipated from the long bondage of centuries. The 'new learning' of the sixteenth century is being completed by a more glorious Renaissance in the twentieth. Historical investigation has shown the insecurity of the foundations on which the chair of Peter rests; priests and churchmen have had their day. Similarly, a closer and more critical examination of the Bible, it is said, has so far discredited its documentary evidence that, whilst its influence may remain, its authority is virtually gone. Subjectivism prevails and must prevail. Assurance in matters of religion is practically unattainable; such measure of it as exists is only to be found amidst the rich but incoherent and bewildering 'varieties of religious experience.'

II

Surely this is a mere caricature of the facts; those who accept it as adequate do not discern the signs of the times. The Christian man acknowledges many of the facts and phenomena adduced,

but he interprets them differently. He believes in the spiritual authority, ultimately self-vindicating, arising out of a manifold revelation which the ever-living God has made, and is continually making, to man. In the opening words of Dante's *Paradiso*, 'The glory of Him who moves everything penetrates through the universe and is resplendent in one part more and in another less.' The glory of that Divine revelation, embodied in various forms, is itself a command, appealing to the mind and heart of man, intended to enlighten, to guide, to move and draw and sway men, till they are led to the free and glad service of sonship. Its basis is found in the personal relation between man and God. As Browning puts it, 'man is not Man as yet.' He needs to learn

> The very primal thesis, plainest law,
> Man is not God, but has God's ends to serve,
> A Master to obey, a course to take,
> Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become.

The Ultimate Reality is not Thought, as Hegelians teach. Acceptance of Divine authority by man does not lie in assent to carefully formulated truths, or in obedience to elaborated moral codes, important as these may be in their place. Ultimate Reality is to be found in Life, as Eucken and Bergson in different ways are striving to show. But not in an abstraction called 'Life,' nor in an *élan vital*, a vital impulse, with its initial and continuous 'thrust,' which acknowledges no origin, provides no guidance, and points to no goal. The ultimate reality is the Living One. The voice with which He calls the living souls whom He has made to know and love and obey Him has an authority of its own. It awakens a response within; it is recognized and known to be Divine.

Before it the human spirit bows instinctively, not blindly or irrationally, but moved by an obeisance of the whole nature—mind and heart and will—which bare reasoning can neither compass nor explain.

The Christian believes that such a revelation of God is made in the universe of which man forms but a fraction; that 'the invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and Godhead.' While this has been true 'since the creation of the world' (Rom. i. 20), it has never been so fully illustrated as now. The revelation made to the ages has been strangely widened and deepened, and unspeakably brightened in character, during the last few generations. The vastness, the unity, the order of the universe are dawning more wonderfully every day on man's astonished gaze. If these studies have not brought with them a deepened sense of Divine Revelation and the authority with which its message is spoken, that is not the fault of science. It is the fault of Theists, and of Christians as their chief representatives. The methods of physical science reach only so far. It is for the spirit of man, taught by the Spirit of God, to read new religious meaning in what we have come to know of the universe. Changes have been effected in our view, not so much of God Himself, as of His methods, by a fuller understanding of the reign of law. A doctrine of evolution, rightly understood, reveals a universe shot through and through with Divine purpose. It means infinite order in infinite complexity, the far-reaching thoughts of an Infinite Mind that rules and commands, though speaking in a voice often hard to understand. The Christians of to-day are not

called to reject modern views of the universe, but to master them and to see that they have religion enough to interpret them. It was not a theologian, but a President of the British Association, who a few months ago bade men 'recognize in the woven fabric of existence, flowing steadily from the loom in an infinite progress towards perfection, the ever-growing garment of a transcendent God.'

Fuller understanding has also come to this generation of the significance of the spirit in man. Long ago it was declared to be 'the lamp of the Lord,' the 'law written in the hearts' of 'them that have no law'—manifest in conscience, in reason, viewed not as the restricted operation of logical understanding, but as an ever-growing capacity to think and feel, to behold and judge, in the moral and spiritual world. Just as there is a correspondence between the mind of man within him and the order of the physical universe without, enabling man to study nature, so there is a correspondence between the spirit of man and God who is Spirit. The image of God in man, however defaced, is not effaced.

> The truth in God's breast
> Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed.

It is truth that commands, that shines in its own light, so that the eye of man, however dim and blurred, cannot but acknowledge it as sunshine. 'We needs must love the highest when we see it.'

The long and various history of mankind as a race points the same lesson. It is summed up by St. John in few but significant words—'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness overcame it not.' The light of the

Eternal Word 'lighteth every man.' This great truth underlying the prologue to the Fourth Gospel has always been theoretically recognized by Christians, though the spirit in which they have regarded 'Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics' has too often belied their creed. Now, as one hemisphere of the world is learning to understand the other better, light can be seen shining where formerly only darkness appeared. Christians are called not only to acknowledge this divine light, to respect it where found, to help to clear it where it is dim and confused, to complete it where it is imperfect, but themselves to learn from the revelation of God thus made. Christianity is indeed unique, it alone can 'save' men. But there is not one God of the hills and another of the valleys. He in whom we trust has not left Himself without witness, and the eyes of Christians are being opened by the comparative study of religions to discern much that had been unknown, or ignored, concerning Him. New knowledge concerning the history of religion in the human race comes almost with the force of a new revelation. God is teaching the Christians of this country, very rapidly in these days, lessons concerning the racial relations of mankind, which men seem very slow to learn. Unless we are much mistaken, where hitherto there have been only scattered rays of revelation concerning God's methods and purposes for the race, the course of the twentieth century will witness a flood of light which may mean a new birth for Christianity and a new age for the world.

2. The Divine Revelation, thus slightly indicated, brings with it a moral and spiritual authority of its own. God speaks 'in many parts and fashions,' and that voice 'finds' us, in Coleridge's

well-known phrase, 'at the deepest part of our being.' It does not follow that it is welcome. It may make itself heard to judge and condemn. It will do so, if God is holy and man is vile. But the voice makes itself heard, as coming from without, though also from within; not from a 'higher self,' nor from 'society,' but with an authority which silences all other voices.

The initiative is with God. The fundamental fact in religion is not that I hold, but that I am held. It is not that I know, but that I am known; not so much that I seek, but that I am found; not that I apprehend, but that I am apprehended. 'We love, because He first loved us.' That is known as the doctrine of Grace. Whatever it be called, it is fundamental in all true religion. To listen to some teachers it would seem as if I, free from all ties and allegiance, lord of the situation, sit down, look around, examine the claims of certain 'religions,' criticize, sift, and at last condescend to accept what satisfies my reason. That may be the method of philosophy—though a very shallow one; it is utterly alien to religion. Religion begins when a man, wandering, groping, helpless, discovers, in his shivering loneliness, the presence, closer to him than his own being, of a Helper and Guide, the very sound of whose voice brings an unspeakable assurance, every word possessing an authority of its own, before which the inmost soul bows low. 'Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

God's voice commands, and at the same time entreats. It says at the same time 'Thou shalt' and 'Wilt thou not?' Its sound is not as the crack of a whip to an animal, the despotic threat hurled at a slave, but an invitation from One who could compel, but will not. The authority with

which He speaks brings its own vindication, but leaves large scope for acknowledgement. It will draw and win, not drive. It is intended to persuade one who knows that he ought to need no argument, but promptly and gladly to obey. Its end is freedom, such as can only be secured by willing service.

> Our wills are ours, we know not how,
> Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.

Such authority does not restrict, but impels; it does not limit, it emancipates. Its laws are not given merely as parapets to keep from falling into a river, or down a precipice; not merely as a welcome clue to a winding way; but as a gracious constraining energy, a celestial power of attraction, such as causes the stars, not to be still, but to speed incessantly in their orbits. Self-realization is attained by the finite spirit when each is in his due relation to the God of the spirits of all flesh and to all brother-spirits in the great kingdom. When this authority is loved and obeyed there is freedom indeed. The hope of it gives a glimpse into the 'liberty of the glory of the sons of God.'

3. The revelation of God thus described is acknowledged by multitudes of non-Christians. It is vast, bright, varied in its illumination, wide as the heavens, yet touching every individual man most closely in the depths of his nature. But at best it is vague and indefinite; insufficient for guidance, and especially failing to touch the quick of man's need. The Christian vindicates its validity as a revelation, but knows that the heart of man cries out for redemption. He holds that, in the history of mankind, God has been dealing with men not merely as ignorant and dependent,

but as sinful and helpless, and that the special revelation which culminates in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, comes with an authority and claims an allegiance of its own. Left to the guidance of nature and conscience and history alone, man is bereft indeed. He needs more than Divine power and wisdom and beneficence; he needs grace that brings salvation. Man needs an authority which is—

(1) Clearly, objectively Divine, lest he be lost in his own imaginings. God must speak to man clearly and articulately in history, with a personal voice, in recognizable deeds.

(2) Redemptive; for in nature and in conscience there is found no answer to the questions, How shall a sinner appear in the presence of a holy God? What must I do to be saved?

(3) Spiritual. Law has its functions, but man cannot live by obedience to regulations. The authority that is to direct men aright and so 'bring many sons unto glory' must be spiritual and personal, not legal and abstract, however complete its directions and however far-reaching its jurisdiction.

(4) Supreme; accounting for the whole of life, ordering the whole, marshalling the whole into order; and making such a resting-place for the spirit as only righteous love can provide.

(5) Universal; dealing with man as man, providing such leadership as man needs, such as man can bear, such as will avail everywhere, always, for all.

(6) Final—not to be superseded. The same yesterday, and to-day, in such wise that men may be assured it will be for ever. A revelation which brings with it its own self-

vindicating authority; and, while appearing in history, one that can never be made obsolete in the age-long processes of evolution, because it sums up the meaning of all history, itself pointing out the End which is beyond all human ends, and carrying within it the promise and potency of life eternal.

III

The Christian believes that such a revelation of God has been given in Jesus Christ, His Son our Lord. Here is no mere piece of Divine handiwork, however glorious, as in the canopy of heaven and the goodly frame of the earth; no mere messenger from Him, however holy and inspired; no mere servant of the Lord of the vineyard, but His Son, God Himself manifest in the flesh. The centre of Christian faith lies in the Incarnation, the tabernacling of God with men as never before or since, and the accomplishment of a work of redemption which is the expression of an eternal purpose before the world was, whose results will be eternal when heaven and earth have passed away. And for the Christian, the centre of all authority is not God creating, God preserving, God revealing, but God *redeeming*. It was by the Saviour, when His work on earth was done, that the words were said, 'All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.'

This section of the present essay on a great subject is the most important of all. Yet it is more slightly treated in this place, because of its very importance. Four other essays are more or less concerned with it. One deals with the trustworthiness of the Gospel narratives, another with our Lord's miracles, another with His Person and

work, while one essay makes His authority its sole subject, treated from the writer's own standpoint.[1] The arguments thus presented, when taken together, go to show that the narratives of the Evangelists—apart from any theory of inspiration—give a sufficiently accurate account of Christian origins to bring us into the presence of the Master. His Person, His teaching, His mighty works, His suffering and death and resurrection on our behalf, constitute Him a perfect and all-sufficient authority in religion and in life, such as men could never have imagined for themselves, but find in Christ to be all that they need, or could desire. A few points not fully developed in the other essays may here be touched upon, as supreme illustrations of 'Revelation and Authority.'

1. The authority of the Master cannot be adequately explained by His well-known power as a teacher. That power was indeed impressive. It struck all His hearers—both the few and the many—when they recognized that He spake as one having authority, not as the scribes. As the people wondered and 'hung upon Him, listening,' they found the secret of His power, not in a certain charm of manner, or fascination of style or story, but in an intrinsic power that His words possessed, in His insight into human nature, His knowledge of human life, His ability to touch the very quick of human need, and infinitely to raise the standard of human ideals. It has been so ever since. This was the characteristic which prompted Stuart Mill's well-known ethical dictum, that no better principle could be laid down for one who would translate the ideal of virtue into practice than so to act as Jesus Christ would approve.

[1] See essays iv., ix., vii., and ii. respectively.

But to represent the authority of Christ as that of the purest and loftiest of human sages is fundamentally to misunderstand it. Those who listened to Him felt that His utterances led beyond His words to Himself. They were compelled to seek an answer to a question which seemed simple, but which was hard to solve: Who think ye that I am? They felt awe in the presence of One who announced a kingdom of which He was to be King, who bade His disciples to hate father and mother, to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye, lest they should miss the supreme prerogative of being enrolled amongst His disciples—as if everything depended for them on the issue whether they were indeed His disciples or no. Later on they came to understand that He was not merely *a* way, but *the* Way, because He was the Truth and the Life.

2. It was what Christ *was* that impressed men, not merely what He said. We are not concerned at this stage to state in any precise phraseology what is meant by the Divine-human Person of Him who is known to men as Jesus the Christ. But it may be said briefly, that—

(1) All the Gospel narratives bear out the general statement that Christ is Son of God, as well as Son of Man. What Ritschl called His 'solidarity with God' is marked throughout.

(2) The Chalcedonian definition, which the Church reached after four centuries of discussion, does not profess to give an 'explanation' of what can never be explained; it indicates rather the lines within which Christian thought should ever move—'truly God, perfectly man, inseparably One Person, unconfusedly in two natures.' Modern theology

may or may not retain the phraseology employed. The very words 'nature,' 'person,' and 'substance' have largely changed their connotation. Without claiming finality for a form of words, the essential meaning of the Person of Christ is here conveyed. Hence—

(3) No doctrine of Kenosis, or self-emptying, can be tenable which explains away the statement that God was in Christ; and—

(4) No assertion of the Divinity of Christ must be allowed to interfere with the statement that in Him is real manhood, a revelation of God operating within the limits and measures of true humanity, though at its highest and best.

(5) Jesus Christ is an object of faith and worship, not merely a perfect exemplar of the way in which man may believe and worship. Continually the attempt is renewed to substitute, in Lessing's phrase, for Christianity the religion of Jesus, to explain away the 'Christ of faith' under cover of a lofty eulogium of the 'Jesus of history.' The 'Jesus' of Liberal Christianity is not to be discovered anywhere in the New Testament, not even in the residuum of an *Ur-Markus*, which is all that some critics would leave us of the Gospels.

3. When all this is said, we have not touched the real root of the authority of Christ. He rules in His kingdom not as Revealer, but as Redeemer; not as Divine Substance, but as Divine Saviour. We learn from what Christ said, from what He did, from what He was, but most of all from what He suffered. The deepest secret—the effective spring—of His authority is found, not in the words spoken on the Mount, but in the death

that was endured when death was conquered, on the cross.

Why should this be? men ask. It is not easy to give an answer to those who will not tread the path of experience to gain one. The offence of the cross has not ceased. It is so much easier to believe in Jesus as a prophet of the first rank than in the Incarnation. It is always easier to believe in a Revealer than in a Redeemer, if men have never felt that deepest need of the soul which Christ came to supply. The consequence is that Christianity is being constantly robbed of its essential significance by those who would be better satisfied with it if it could be made to fall into line with other religions. Physical science hates exceptions, and scorns the supernatural. It is a fatal habit of the time that would sublimate Christianity by emptying it of its distinctive teaching, and paring off and pruning away some of its essential characteristics, supposing thus to commend it more easily to general belief. Christianity does share some features with other religions, as being monotheistic, markedly ethical, and as teaching universal brotherhood. Its distinctiveness lies in its doctrine of redemption. It insists that the real evil in man lies in perversion of the will, that the chief work to be done for man and in man is reconciliation with the Father, that this is impossible without atonement, an act in which holy condemnation of the evil and uttermost love for the sinner are so completely blended that the holiness becomes unintelligible without the love and the love meaningless without the holiness. The only other great redemptive religion is Buddhism, and its redemption means deliverance from the evil of individual existence, not the perfecting of the individual by his deliver-

ance from sin and the building up of perfected individuals into an eternal kingdom. This is the work that the Son of God came from heaven to accomplish, and the foundation of His mediatorial kingdom is to be found neither in His words, nor in His person, but in the work of salvation, wrought out by the Person who spoke the words and showed how their teaching was to be realized. He 'was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name.'

4. The authority of Christ is supreme in Christianity. Shall we say then, 'Back to Christ'? By all means, if we have left Him; but let it be clearly understood what is meant by the well-worn phrase. Back from what and to what? Back from Paul to Jesus? From the Saviour worshipped by millions of saints in all climes through two thousand years to a 'sweet Galilean vision,' or to the apocalyptic herald of a consummation that never came to pass? As Dr. Fairbairn has said in words that can hardly be too often quoted: 'It is not Jesus of Nazareth who has so powerfully entered into history: it is the deified Christ who has been believed, loved, and obeyed as the Saviour of the world. . . . If the doctrine of the Person of Christ were explicable as the mere mythical apotheosis of Jesus of Nazareth, it would become the most insolent and fateful anomaly in history.'[1] It is to the whole Christ of the New Testament that Christians need to return if at any time they drift away from Him. For it is the Christ who is set forth in the Apostolic *κήρυγμα*, He who wrought out the work of salvation on the cross, who has saved the

[1] *Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 15.

millions in the course of the centuries. It is that Christ and He alone who completely reveals the God of Christianity—a God who not only knows but loves, who not only rules but suffers, not only orders and controls, but who has Himself entered into the deadliest of man's conflicts, that with sin and evil, in order that He may enable the spirits whom He has brought into being, and who have wandered from Him, to struggle and to conquer, to yield to His grace and surrender to His authority, so that they may learn to delight in His will and at last share in His glory. Herein lies the meaning of the authority of Christ here and now; this is why every thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And thus the way is being prepared for the end, when all things shall be subjected unto Him, when He shall have abolished all other rule and authority and power; when the Lamb that was slain shall receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing; when the Son shall deliver up the kingdom of the redeemed to the Father, and God shall be all in all.

IV

Such are the essential features of the Christian religion. But other questions arise, belonging to organized Christianity, which have (perhaps inevitably) occupied a disproportionate place in controversy. The supreme and final authority for the Christian is God in Christ; but where is this authority lodged and how is the will of Christ now to be ascertained? Through priest and Church and Pope? By means of book or documents? In continuous tradition, in sacred

institutions and sacraments, or by immediate revelation to the individual soul? Or, if more than one vehicle of authority is to be recognized, which is the chief and how is the relation between them to be determined? Questions that are secondary for faith may become primary for organization. On this particular subject the differences between Christians have become so acute and serious as almost to constitute different religions.

1. In reply to the question, What is the proximate source, repository, or seat of authority in the Christian religion, the answer given in this essay runs somewhat as follows. God-in-Christ by the Holy Spirit teaches men still in many ways—through the Bible, by means of the Church, always appealing to the individual reason and conscience, which is enlightened from within as well as from without. But the chief source of authority is that record of Divine revelation, culminating in Christ, which is contained in the Bible. In that Divine Library is given a sufficient record of a series of revelations gathering round *the* revelation, partly leading up to Jesus Christ our Lord, partly leading on from Him; but of the whole He is the centre, the climax, and the crown. We are dependent on the New Testament for the transmission of knowledge concerning Christ; and for this and other reasons the collection of books called the Bible occupies a position of its own, which constitutes it, when rightly interpreted, a supreme rule of faith and practice for Christian believers. Christ is first as Lord—the whole Christ of the New Testament. The Bible becomes the word of Christ, if it be rightly read and understood, with Himself as the Light of the whole. The Holy Spirit has taught also from the first in the community of the Christian Church and so

teaches still. But the Bible is the norm for the Church, not the Church for the Bible. The duty of the Church in relation to the Scriptures is to preserve, transmit, distribute, interpret, and obey. Creeds and Councils, sacred traditions and experiences, have their place and are full of instruction; who but must desire to learn what these have to teach? But their conclusions need always to be tested by the mind of the Master, by the revelation given in Him and through the Apostles who were sent forth in His name during the primal and normative period of church history. To the sacred community called by the name of Christ are entrusted the important functions of maintaining and promulgating Christian truth, and of administering Christian institutions. To the individual Christian, guided by the Holy Spirit, is given a power of discernment which it is his privilege and duty to use; a right of free inquiry, which may be abused, but which it is as important for him legitimately to exercise in due subordination to the community, as it is for the community to discharge duties which he cannot. Hence each successive generation of Christians has its own work to do, not only in maintaining and extending the kingdom of Christ, but in gaining new insight into truth, learning fresh lessons of His will, and handing them on to the generations following, so that in the course of the ages His growing and widening purposes may be fully accomplished. The authority in religion for the Christian, then, is the living Lord and Divine truth, 'as truth is in Jesus'—

Recorded in the Bible,
Administered and applied by the Church,
Assimilated by Reason and Experience.

In the religion of Christ, authority is spiritual.

It is so exercised that it leads to liberty ; law leads to love. For the law itself is but the expression of the holy love of the Father, manifested in the Son and shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit of God. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is not law as constraint imposed from without, but as the expression of the Divine will accepted from within, by the whole man—body and soul, mind and heart and will, a servant transformed into a son. In earth, as in heaven, 'His will is our peace.'

2. The Bible, it has been said, is the supreme rule of faith and practice. But the Bible must be rightly understood and interpreted. It is not a code of laws, it is not a system of doctrine ; it is a living word, literature that is the outcome of life, instinct with the principles of spiritual life and fraught with innumerable 'springing and germinant accomplishments.' If the Bible is to be rightly used as norm or standard, there must be due discrimination between its parts and their mutual relations must be justly apprehended. The Bible shows a marvellous unity, but all parts are not on the same level. The distinction between Old and New Testaments lies on the surface, the former being preparatory only[1] ; but the principle which distinguishes them needs to be followed throughout. The New Testament is authoritative for the Christian in a sense that the Old is not ; but the Old Testament possesses a permanent value. It is 'able to make wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus' and so becomes 'profitable for teaching, reproof, and instruction in righteousness.' It is quoted and appealed to by Apostles and Evangelists, and

[1] The relation between the two Testaments is dealt with in Essay III., pp. 72 foll.

by our Lord Himself. It should be hardly necessary to add—were not so many mistakes still made through disregard of the principle — that history, where found, is to be understood as history with its necessary limitations, poetry as poetry, prophecy as prophecy, with its conditions and limits, speeches and addresses, parables and visions as such, each with its own laws and characteristics, devout reflections as such, yet so that these 'many parts and fashions' constitute one whole. And it is the one organic whole, faithfully interpreted, that constitutes the rule of faith and practice in evangelical churches, its authority being derived from its character as the record of a Divine Revelation.

It is sometimes said that the Bible may be used as a guide, because it is a 'record of religious experiences.' It is this, but how little would it be if it were not much more! It is the record of a many-sided, progressive revelation of God, with one source and end, one centre and goal. The Bible does not stand as a sum-total of the highest processes of human piety, but as a message, coming indeed through human channels, but unfolding the mind and will of God in relation to human redemption. There is in it more than religious illumination, more than soul-manifestation: there is an unveiling of God Himself, discerned in and through the experience of men, but none the less appealing to men with authority as a Divine message, coming in 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power.'

Every part in its own measure. A living body has many members,—some insignificant, some vital. The human body, as Richard Baxter put it, has nails and hair, as well as brain and heart. Discrimination between parts is necessary, and the

purpose of the whole revelation must be kept in view, else Scripture ceases to be a true guide. When the Bible is used in a way that was never intended, the results are disastrous. 'We must likewise take great heed,' says Hooker, 'lest, in attributing to Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which it hath most abundantly to be less reverently esteemed.' [1]

3. The Bible is a book of religion. It is not a manual of physical science, nor primarily a storehouse of historical, chronological, geographical, and archaeological knowledge. Incidentally, much is to be learned from it on very many aspects of human life; but it is as a Book of Redemption that it is intended to rule and guide. The cosmogony of Genesis i. is not an anticipation of modern astronomy and biology, though even Häckel speaks of the 'surprising clearness and simplicity' with which that chapter sets forth 'the two great and fundamental ideas of modern science—separation or differentiation, and the idea of progressive development and perfecting.' Science itself changes constantly; if we are to trust prognostications, marked changes as to its teaching on the very constitution of matter are to follow those that have recently taken place. The revelation 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' remains the same throughout them all.

The revelation is obviously progressive. The doctrine of two Testaments proves this, but no part of either is rightly understood if the whole is viewed as static, fixed, as if mechanically regulated and determined. The living word lives and grows. A large part of the foolish cavils and of

[1] *Eccl. Pol.* ii. viii. 7; ed. Keble, i. 336.

the serious moral objections raised against certain parts of the Old Testament fall to the ground when the progressive nature of revelation is borne in mind. The Bible is not honoured, but discredited, when isolated portions used as 'texts' are separated from their context and quoted as 'the word of God.'

Exegesis is a progressive science. The principles of interpretation need to be sound and clear; but, if they are to be adequate, they must be at the same time elastic. The question, What did the writer mean? may seem a very simple one. But where there is no obscurity in the words themselves, it is obvious that the attempt to draw out the significance of a passage in the mind of a writer and translate it into exactly corresponding language of a period centuries afterwards, is not so simple. History, law, prophecy have their own several modes of utterance, and as soon as symbolism enters into the text variety appears in the commentaries. The interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles has been affected by a study of the Greek of the papyri, and only a student of language knows how subtly words change their meaning as the generations pass.

4. Obviously there is room for Biblical 'criticism.' The word is an unfortunate one, considering its popular acceptation, but it is too late to change it. Criticism implies judgement based on careful, discriminating study, pursued in accordance with principles applicable to literature generally. Such study is not only legitimate, it is absolutely necessary for the intelligent use of such a book as the Bible. 'He that would take away reason to make room for revelation,' says John Locke, 'puts out the light of both.' The right of free inquiry here, so far from invalidating authority,

is the only means of establishing an authority that is to be intelligently, as well as freely, accepted.

Part of the minute and laborious study of the last century and a half has been devoted to 'Lower' criticism, the business of which is to ascertain as nearly as possible the exact original text of Scripture. Another part—called 'Higher,' as necessarily more advanced than the above earlier stage of inquiry—is concerned with the date, authorship, genuineness and unity, or composite character of the documents in question, with the measure of historical accuracy discernible, the existence of discrepancies apparent or real, and kindred questions. Such inquiries are absolutely necessary because of the form in which the records of revelation are cast. Sometimes the determination of date or authorship may be comparatively unimportant, as in many of the Psalms; sometimes very much may turn upon the issue, as in the case of the fourth Gospel.

Obviously the utmost care is needed in carrying on such work in connexion with a pre-eminently sacred book. The dangers are such as attend the handling of a masterpiece of art, where the acid used by the cleaner to remove incrustations may destroy the pigment and the canvas itself. But recent Biblical criticism—if a brief general statement on so wide a subject may be attempted—has proved of the greatest value in several directions. It has shown the gradual, living development of religious ideas in Scripture and the relation between its various stages; as, for instance, in the legislation of the Old Testament. It has shown the importance of combined testimony; the book of Isaiah, for example, as now read, is far richer and more instructive than when it was understood to have been composed from end to

end by the son of Amoz. It has drawn attention to the deeper meaning of prophecy and its true relation to the New Testament, where formerly stress was laid upon comparatively superficial coincidences. Its analysis, though often excessive, has in many ways been most helpful; as, for example, in the case of Christ's eschatological teaching in the Synoptic Gospels. It has aided in the work, always difficult and delicate, of disentangling the original teaching of Scripture from theological dogmas, unconsciously read into it, which had come to be considered a part of Scripture itself.

Criticism has constantly needed to be criticized. The errors caused by preconceptions, subjective and arbitrary judgements, the disregard of valuable tradition, exaggeration of discrepancies, abuse of the argument from silence, sometimes by unworthy personal idiosyncrasies, have shown that those who judge need to beware lest they be judged. The charge of rationalism has been freely brought against critics—sometimes fairly, sometimes unfairly. The line which distinguishes the use from the abuse of free and reasonable inquiry is a difficult one to draw, especially where the most sacred themes are concerned. But it is reasonable for a believer to inquire critically into the data of Scripture, as long as the revelation of Scripture is kept as a standard. Such criticism becomes unreasonable and excessive when standards derived from other sources are employed to reject, or to modify, the revelation itself. Especially is this the case where pre-judgements in relation to the supernatural form tacit presuppositions governing the whole inquiry. The authority of revelation may easily be disproved by those who explain away all that is inconsistent with naturalistic principles. Free inquiry

is not only permissible; it is invited. Christ and His apostles neither praise, nor inculcate, blind faith. But when authority is reasonably established, it is to be trusted and obeyed, even beyond the limits of experience.

5. The Church has wisely hesitated to lay down a precise doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, while always accepting the fact that it is θεόπνευστος, God-breathed. One reason why exact definition is both difficult and undesirable is that this word has come to include ideas that are quite distinct, though closely connected. Inspiration may mean—primarily and etymologically it does mean—the mode by which the Holy Spirit influenced the minds of the writers—a subject of which we know little indeed. In our own consciousness the Spirit blows as He lists; Divine influence, least of all, can be analysed and defined. But inspiration may be understood to mean the extent to which the minds of the writers were divinely illuminated, the measure of insight or foresight granted to them, the area of their knowledge, sometimes including the doctrine that they were miraculously preserved from all error. And the word has come to be identified very largely with Divine authority, the influence in virtue of which the Bible is held to be a complete and sufficient guide to men.

In trying to ascertain the true meaning of inspiration in relation to the Scriptures, an inductive, rather than a deductive, method should be pursued. The distinction between the two is familiar, and is well indicated by Dr. Sanday in his Bampton Lectures. It is not sound reasoning to say that because the Bible is the inspired Word of God, therefore it must possess certain characteristics, as if a definition were an argu-

ment. In Euclid and in Spinoza the case is different. The dangers of the high *a priori* road are well known, and Butler pointed them out long ago in relation to this subject. 'As we are in no sort judges beforehand by what laws or rules, in what degree, and by what means it might be expected that God would naturally instruct us, so, on the supposition of His affording light and instruction by revelation, we cannot tell by what methods and in what proportions supernatural light and instruction would be afforded us.'[1]

The Book itself will tell us all we need to know. For generations it has given its own answer to these questions, as multitudes have spiritually fed upon its contents and been satisfied. It was Heine, the sceptic and cynic, who said of the 'little old brown book' to which he turned in his worst moments, 'He who has lost his God may find Him there, and he who has never known Him shall be met by a breath of the Divine Word.' But whether it were necessary for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose that the human instrument should be purely passive, that the very words of the message should be directly given as by an external voice, that the writers who were helping to build up the kingdom of God should be miraculously enabled to understand the constitution of nature, to know the facts of history, the laws of science, and the principles of philosophy and psychology—is quite another question. Such positions cannot be assumed in advance; they form a fit subject for inquiry. The accuracy of the writers in matters of detail has often been vindicated after it had seemed as if they were ignorant and in error. But no doctrine of inspiration is essential to Christianity

[1] *Analogy*, Pt. II. ch. iii. § 7.

which makes it necessary to prove the entire freedom of inspired writers from mistake, or compels us to reconcile all discrepancies and contradictions which may be found within the pages of the Bible. The writers do not claim omniscience, and men would not believe them if they did. If an absolutely inerrant text of Scripture had been given, in order to be of use it would need an absolutely inerrant interpreter; and who shall keep the keepers? The long history of indeterminable controversies in the Church, all the combatants in which appealed to the same authority, should long ere this have pointed its own lesson. A providential guidance over the history of this sacred volume, adequate to the needs of the case and sufficient for the guidance of Christ's Church on earth, is quite another matter, and there is abundant reason for believing that such has been granted and will endure to the end. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall never pass away.'

The guidance of the Holy Spirit was vouchsafed to the writers of Scripture in various measures for various purposes. Sometimes they were enabled to survey past history in Divine light, sometimes to discern the significance of the present, sometimes to forecast the future and understand the consequences of actions in accordance with Divine laws, as other men could not. Sometimes they were guided in the selection of incidents in the course of history, sometimes chronicling, sometimes interpreting, but always surveying life from a standpoint which in and of themselves they could not have reached. But the contents of the Bible are so various and the conditions under which its books were written so different, that it is almost impossible to generalize. It

does not come within the scope of this essay to deal with the subject of the canon and the methods by which the long process of selection was carried out. But here again we discern general providential guidance, not miraculous preservation from the possibility of error. The treasure is given 'in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God.' The argument that if the vessel is earthen it cannot contain Divine treasure rests upon a premiss fatal to revelation —and to much besides.

6. If it be said that the view of Divine revelation and authority here laid down implies endless thought, labour, and investigation on the part of man, that no 'simple and effective' direction such as men have expected is given, we may at once admit it. It has not pleased the Almighty to devise any plan for saving men trouble which they will be the better for facing and mastering. The Roman Catholic is logical. He knows that if the kind of infallible direction man wants—not needs—is to be provided, an infallible book will not serve: there must be an infallible Church to expound it. And, inasmuch as Oecumenical Councils of the Church are not easily assembled, and are not always satisfactory when they have assembled, it is a great help to have an infallible Pope always on the spot, whose word will suffice without summoning a Council. And inasmuch as even so the individual has hard work to grope his way amidst conflicting duties and pressing temptations along the journey of life, the Church of Rome provides in the confessional a complete 'direction' for each man's conscience, and by priestly absolution relieves him from the burden of unforgiven sin. So, with the Eucharist for celestial food and extreme unction with its

viaticum for the valley of the shadow of death, the believer is called, not so much to walk, as to be carried along the path that leads to everlasting life.

No such crutches are good for the pilgrim in his 'progress.' The Lord Jesus Christ did not provide them, and the Church that has essayed to do so is not, as it claims to be, infallible. Protestants should remember the rock whence they were hewn. The Bible is indeed 'the religion of Protestants,' but its authority is spiritual, its meaning must be spiritually discerned, and the response to its appeal must be spiritual, given in the exercise of personal trust and personal activity of mind and conscience. No language can be too strong to describe the worth of the Bible as a spiritual guide. But it is not given to save men the task of thought, inquiry, discrimination, and judgement. A battle for the truth seems to be necessary if spiritually we are to be, not babes, but men. 'If thou take forth the precious from the vile,' was God's word to Jeremiah, 'thou shalt be as My mouth.' The process of sifting truth from error has continually to be repeated in the history of the Church, because it is a part of God's way of educating both it and the world.

Such a process is being carried on in our own day in relation to religious authority, and many find it too keen and trying. Οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας, said Thucydides long ago—'So little pains will most men take in their search for truth; they turn more willingly to that which is ready to their hand.' On the subject of the authority of the Bible, the emphasis is now happily being shifted from the letter to the spirit, from the form to the substance, from a literal and mechanical theory of inspiration, which has striven to tithe mint, anise, and cummin, to a

firm insistence upon the gospel of God in Christ perpetually studied and interpreted and lived afresh, as it has commended itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Professor W. P. Paterson, in his admirable Baird Lecture, points out one significant feature of this change: 'Protestant theology can no longer profess that it fully enunciates its own theory when it declares that the Bible is the supreme rule of faith and practice; it requires, in addition, to formulate and work with a definition of the essential content of revelation which it extracts from the Bible.'[1] Dr. Paterson follows up that pregnant sentence by discussing the Substance of Christian Doctrine, as well as what he calls the Seat of Doctrine. In apologetics the two should be separated as little as possible. Along the lines of the sentence quoted may be found the true principles of reunion among Protestant Churches, and a firmer ground of resistance to the errors of ecclesiasticism, Roman, Greek, or Anglican, than has always been adopted.

A change of emphasis is needed. Spiritual authority is to be spiritually discerned. Conflicts are being waged over outposts by troops that are needed for the citadel. The Inquisitors who argued against Galileo that, if the sun does not move round the earth, religion is imperilled, have their descendants amongst us. It would seem as if men were warranted in arguing, 'The world was not created in six days, therefore there is no God. Moses did not write the whole of the Pentateuch, nor David the greater part of the Psalms, therefore Christianity is not true.' First things must be sought first, and placed first, and kept first. If the foundations of spiritual

[1] *The Rule of Faith*, Pt. I. ch. vii. p. 166.

authority are to be firmly secured there may have to be a readjustment of the relative importance of *credenda*, and a clearer declaration of what is meant by a scale of doctrinal values. There is a centre in the Christian faith, there is also a circumference. Some articles of faith that belong to the circumference—to the penumbra of revelation—have been placed at the centre, and some articles of pious opinion should never have been admitted within the circle of faith at all. The gospel of the grace of God to sinful man is the centre, and Dr. Forsyth's recent vigorous defence of 'the principle of authority' derives its strength from the fact that he resolutely refuses to leave the centre at all. The results, even the proximate results, of such a process of readjustment and sifting do not come within the scope of this essay. But those who understand the true meaning of authority in Christianity will be content to be certain where God has given the means of reaching certainty and to refrain from dogmatizing where they do not know. And such disciples in every generation will learn the lessons that God can teach men only by the slow education of the ages—they will continually find that He has 'more light yet to break forth out of His holy Word.'

. . . . .

To sum up. There is authority in the voice of God everywhere, and for the Christian the voice of God in Christ is supreme and final. In order to hear and understand the meaning of that voice, the Bible, the Church, and Reason are all valuable, the teaching of the Bible, with Christ as its centre and Lord, being paramount for good reasons named. It has been said that, of

three schools existing in the Church to-day, one lays stress on authority, another on experience, and another on criticism, each being antagonistic to the others. But the three factors must all be recognized and correlated together in just proportions if the work of Christ's Church is to be rightly done in the world. The authority with which revelation speaks may be examined and tested by free inquiry, but it must be assimilated by experience before its real power is felt and understood. The Father of Spirits is training His children for perfect sonship. He declares His will, He reveals His grace, He has spoken in His Son; but He does not compel men's service, does not silence inquiry, does not provide irrefragable demonstrations, or short cuts to certainty. He is striving to teach faith, to secure free and willing obedience, and such assimilation of Divine truth as will lead to emancipation from error and to service under the perfect law of liberty. 'If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

II

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST

GEORGE G. FINDLAY, D.D.

WHEN the Apostle Peter declared to his fellow-countrymen on the day of Pentecost that 'God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified,' the authority of Jesus Christ was already fixed in the faith of His disciples and on its way to world-wide prevalence. Christendom was virtually created. Let us endeavour to trace in outline the steps by which our Lord attained His sovereignty. Such consideration should help us to right views respecting its present exercise, and its bearing on personal life and the questions of the time.

1. *His birth and Old Testament antecedents.*—Two of the Evangelists relate the lovely story of the Nativity, ascribing the human person of Jesus to an origin in which earthly passion had no part. He 'was conceived of the Holy Ghost.' 'Wherefore,' said the Angel of the Annunciation to Mary, 'the holy thing which is begotten shall be called Son of God.' The tale of the Virgin Birth, however, could not be told till there were ears prepared for it. Not a whisper of the mystery was breathed during the ministry of Jesus, nor in the early preaching or writing of the Apostles. 'Mary kept all these things close, pondering them in her heart'; so it must have been with the very few who were in the secret—until the hour was ripe. The authority of Jesus Christ was not based,

in the first instance, upon His superhuman birth, nor upon the tokens and sayings which attended His advent; the knowledge of these wondrous things belonged to the crown rather than the foundation of the Apostles' teaching.

The prophecies of the Old Testament played a prominent part in apostolic argument; but the authority of Jesus was not primarily grounded upon these. Only after the event was the veil lifted from the prophetic words; the risen Lord 'opened the understanding' of His disciples 'to understand the Scriptures.' A secret presentiment of Him, and preparation for Him, ran through the older revelation; but this was God's 'hidden wisdom,' waiting to start into legibility under the breath of the Spirit of Jesus.

2. Apart from the testimony of the Forerunner, which influenced a handful of disciples, our Lord commenced His public work with no credentials beyond those He carried in *His own person.* He was spoken of as 'Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth'[1]; to the Nazarenes, He was just 'the carpenter, the son of Mary.' The conditions of His earthly lot were such as to throw into the strongest relief the ascendancy of character and personal force on which everything Jesus accomplished was built up. What the writer to the Hebrews argues respecting His priesthood, holds equally of His kingship: in Himself He found the seat of His authority and the means for its realization.

From the hour of His baptism onwards a strange influence attended the presence of Jesus;

[1] John i. 45, 46. With some knowledge of the difficulties attaching to the fourth Gospel, the writer is persuaded of its historicity, and will not debar himself from quoting it. See pp. 111–113.

He 'returned,' as St. Luke describes it, 'in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.' Henceforth He 'displayed an incomparable majesty of bearing, an elevation of tone and mien, which was recognized on every hand. The possessed, the crowd at Nazareth, the Pharisees of the capital, His own disciples, all were conscious of it. . . . The secret of this overwhelming impression lay not in His miracles . . . it lay in Himself. Somehow He was able to impress the certainty that in Him men were face to face with God.'[1] Apart from any knowledge of His origin, prior to any understanding about His titles or offices, in the mere encounter of soul with soul, whenever susceptible natures confronted Jesus their homage was forthcoming—a homage such as men have paid to none other of their kind. This fact lies on the surface of the New Testament.

Now this is a fundamental fact. Authority is bound up with personality, and is a vital expression of it. The mystery attaching to the latter belongs likewise to the former. Commanding personages, in every order of life, carry with them a certain *aura*, an impression of power which rank and office cannot confer, which does not always accrue to the wisest or best, which one cannot trace perhaps to anything the man has said or done; but there it is—an undefinable something that exacts deference and attention, an effluence of the spirit which one feels rather than understands. One hardly knows what to call this attribute but sheer force of personality. It is the quality which marks the chiefs and leaders of mankind—the Caesars and Napoleons, the Pauls and Wesleys; it is hard to put limits to its potentialities.

[1] *The Person of Jesus Christ*, by H. R. Mackintosh, p. 31.

Joined to this immeasurable energy of spirit, there was in Jesus a spotless and radiant purity, a consuming devotion to the heavenly Father's will and a boundless love and pity for men, which touched into reverent awe the homage rendered to Him and charged it with intense affection. It is a singular fact, however, that the earliest and most emphatic tribute to the holiness of Jesus that we meet with in His earthly course came through the lips of a demoniac!

By all accounts, Jesus possessed the genius of authority in the superlative degree and displayed it in unexampled ways, both in the moral and material sphere. Enough for Him to say, 'Follow Me,' 'Go into all the world,'—and men were found to leave home and country, and to speed on His errands to the ends of the earth. Enough for Him to declare, 'It was said by them of old time, but I say unto you'—and the tradition of a thousand years was reversed. Enough to exclaim, 'Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit!'—and the screaming demoniac grew calm and sane. Aye, and enough for Jesus to command, as He stood on the foundering boat, 'Peace, be still!'—and winds and waves were hushed. So all the narrators have told us; and however marvellous the tale, we feel that it is in keeping with the personality disclosed; the narrative is psychologically consistent, and in character throughout. The ascendancy of Jesus Christ was acquired through no attestation of the Church, through no *à priori* deduction from Scripture, but through the gradual perception on the part of those about Him of what He Himself was. Overmastering forces streamed from His living presence.

This transcendent Personality, as multitudes

believe, is still alive and in contact with mankind. It has proved mightier than death, and has passed beyond the decays of time. In the case of other heroes of the past, their ideas and their example may survive them, but the magic of their presence has vanished beyond recall. The spell of Jesus lives and spreads—'yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever.'

3. We pass on to the specific forms which our Lord's authority took during His earthly ministry, the modes of service through which He rose to sovereignty.

That authority was first definitely realized, and is still most freely recognized, in the sphere of *religious teaching*. Not the majesty of His presence alone, His tone and manner of saying things, gave weight to what Jesus said: if His words only were extant and we knew nothing of Him further, we should say, 'Never man spake like this man!' He has dwarfed the loftiest of antecedent teachers; the greatest that have followed confess Him infinitely greater. Other masters in religion sound like babblers compared with Jesus. To dwell upon our Lord's superb intellectual powers, His mastery of expression, His pedagogic skill, the universal breadth combined in His teaching with tender, individualizing sympathy, seems an impertinence. Supreme as these endowments of our Master were, it was not such abilities that made Him the Teacher of mankind, but the fact that He knew and taught the one thing needful—the truth about God. Our Lord summed up His doctrine in His words to the Father concerning the disciples: 'I have made known unto them *Thy name*, and will make it known.' In this knowledge lay His gift of 'eternal life.' Simon Peter's confession touched the heart of the situa-

tion, when he said: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast words of eternal life.'

From the first the hearers of Jesus felt the unique power that accompanied His words. The Galileans 'were astonished at His teaching,' St. Mark tells us in the middle of his first chapter, 'for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.' Here was truth no longer at second-hand—laboured, disputatious, trivial, mechanical—but springing fresh from the heavenly fountains; truth luminous, poignant, beautiful, infinitely stern and infinitely gracious, shining straight from the mind of God into the heart of man.

4. 'Jesus the Nazarene, a prophet mighty in deed and word': thus the mournful disciples on the way to Emmaus described Jesus to Himself. Amongst the authoritative deeds of our Lord's ministry, the foremost place belongs to *His acts of forgiveness.* He *forgives sin* not as committed against Himself, but *against God.* Surpassingly great as a teacher of divine truth, in this other respect Jesus Christ stands alone.

The first recorded occurrence of this nature is instructive in many ways. The paralytic, brought with difficulty by his friends, is laid on his mattress before Jesus. 'Seeing their faith,' and penetrating through the bodily condition of the sufferer to the aching need of his soul, Jesus pronounces the startling words, 'Child, thy sins are forgiven!'—'He blasphemes,' mutter the Scribes: 'who can forgive sins but God only?'—In this fashion Jesus Christ went about amongst men and women crushed with guilt, frenzied by evil passion, leprous with moral corruption, calling them to repentance and dispensing God's pardon. And the words took effect! Here was revealed

the very 'gospel,' the essence of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Thus Jesus wrought in numberless instances the supreme miracle of absolution. He proved Himself the Saviour of sinners no less than the Master of truth, at once revealing God and reconciling men to God. This was the prerogative He prized above all others; He vindicated His authority as the plenipotentiary of pardon expressly and triumphantly.

Looking back over an experience of thirty years, the Church declared in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'He hath an unchangeable priesthood. He is able to save to the uttermost, seeing that He ever liveth.' After the lapse of nineteen centuries the testimony is repeated, from every quarter of the world. By His forgiving love Jesus has won hearts to Him universally; on this power rests His empire over our race. He lifts from the conscience of mankind the intolerable burden of sin against God.

This faculty of our Lord's is as superhuman as the former. The challengers of Jesus were theologically right in their axiom, that God only can forgive sins. To know God as Jesus did, to remit sin as Jesus did, one must indeed *be* God; and the second of these prerogatives presupposes the first.

The action of Jesus in forgiving sin implies His whole redeeming work. Simple good-will upon His part, and the mere *saying* of the absolving words, would not suffice for a valid remission; these were effectual, beforehand or afterwards, in virtue of the atoning *deed* which it was His office to perform. According to the fourth Gospel, the Baptist hailed Him at the outset as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the

sin of the world'[1]: this rôle our Lord accepted when He declared that 'the Son of man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many,' and in the words pronounced over the cup of His sacrament, 'This is My blood of the Covenant, which is shed for many.' The language of John iii. 14, 15, indicates that quite early in His course our Lord anticipated the sacrificial death; allowing the possibility that the Apostle's report of the conversation with Nicodemus was coloured by his later reflections, the parable of the Uplifted Serpent bears the unmistakable stamp of Jesus; and it tells its own tale.

Add to the above teaching about the means of salvation the assumption, made by Jesus in language of a sublimity equal to the claim, and attested by all the Gospels, that He will act as Judge at 'the last day,' that He is the Awarder of Doom to mankind. Universal Saviour, Intercessor, Judge—our Lord knew Himself empowered to deal with sin in its full scope and final issues, in its whole bearing upon man's relations to God whether as affecting his present state or future destiny. His authority Jesus stretched into the realms of 'eternal life' and 'eternal punishment.'

5. Bound up with His awful authority in the

[1] To account for this utterance of John the Baptist's, it is sufficient that we should put together his consuming sense of the burden of sin resting upon men (as this is shown by the Synoptic Gospels) and his knowledge of Isaiah liii. He 'preached a baptism looking to remission of sins'; it was in this one direction that Prophecy held out the clear hope of such remission. John i. 29 appears to be the proper complement of Mark i. 4. The only question is whether the Baptist would be likely to think in this connexion of 'the sin *of the world*,' rather than *of the people* or *of Israel*—whether his disciple the Evangelist may not have widened (quite appropriately) the reference of his first master's expression, and added to it in this way an interpretative touch.

forgiveness of sins was the mysterious power which Jesus Christ exercised in *the healing of disease* and in other kindred miracles. The latter function accompanied and authenticated the former.

The disputers beside the couch of the paralytic could not know directly His power to forgive: they brought no penitence to Jesus, and they were blind to the tokens of penitence and pardon in others; but they could see the difference between palsy and health! And our Lord would convince them, if He might. So He proceeds: 'that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority upon earth to forgive sins'—then, turning to the patient, 'Arise,' He says, 'take up thy bed, and go unto thine house': the stricken man obeys! 'Which of the two is easier?' Jesus had put it to them, 'to say this, or that?' The second miracle was for Him the easy task—a 'sign' only and index to the former. To loose men from their sins would cost Him Calvary[1]; to make the cripple walk was in comparison a little thing.

Though subordinate, the physical miracles had their specific value, as 'signs' of God's concern for human want and suffering, and evidences of the interest of Christ in the 'whole man' (John vii. 23). They mark the extension of the Redeemer's authority into that world of material nature with

[1] The writer assumes, though he cannot argue the point here, that St. John has correctly represented the final sacrifice as, in some form, before the mind of Jesus from the beginning; see John i. 29, ii. 19, 20, iii. 14, 15. An important school of modern interpreters, arguing from the Synoptic narratives, maintain that only toward the close of His career, when success by other means was found impossible, did Jesus perceive that through *death* salvation must come. They suppose that Jesus learnt by experience the necessity of the Atonement, that in fact it was an afterthought, a sort of *pis aller*.

which man's being is so closely identified and his destiny allied (see Rom. viii. 19, 20). Those 'mighty works' were prophetic; they gave an earnest of 'the redemption of our body,' with which our salvation culminates. Having answered these ends, the miraculous manifestations ceased, when the mission of forgiveness was launched, when men had come to 'know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins.' The Church, as the Body of Christ, took over His office of feeding the hungry and healing the sick, exercising her ministry of God-given skill and world-wide beneficence henceforth under the normal laws of nature. Meanwhile, the power that wrought in the wondrous deeds of Jesus is with us always, and operates through ten thousand hidden ways of help in response to the prayer of faith.

The cure of demoniacs exhibited our Lord's authority in the worlds both seen and unseen. Nothing did more to impress the eye-witnesses with the mastery of Jesus than His manner of handling the possessed: 'with authority He commandeth even the unclean spirits,' said the Galileans, 'and they obey Him!' The recognition by Jesus of a demonic force behind certain forms of madness is unmistakable; His attitude in this matter is not lightly to be dismissed, as though it were an accommodation to Jewish notions or might be accounted for by the superstitious temper of the age and the lack of medical science—as though belief in malignant spirits were imposed on the Son of God by the conditions of His incarnation. The question is one that touched the mission of Jesus intimately and profoundly; here surely we expect from Him vision and reality. In contact with cases of possession,

as in all His references to the subject, our Lord betrays an intensity of feeling and uses an incisiveness of expression and action, which speak for direct intuition on His part. The Good Physician was dealing in these victims of Satan with sin in its concentrated virulence, a disease raging in body and soul at once. He was grappling consciously with a superhuman antagonism, behind moral and physical evil confronting 'the Evil One'—'the strong one armed,' whom He despoils as 'the stronger.' Similar exorcisms, wrought in the name of Jesus, have been witnessed in other lands than Palestine, down to our own times.[1] Science has not said its last word on these occult phenomena.

6. The sense of their Master's greatness grew on the disciples, until, after His resurrection, the slowest of faith was fain to cry out, 'My Lord and my God!' But His Godhead once recognized and His bodily presence removed, the earthly lineaments faded; the Christ gradually effaced Jesus. In her deep reverence, the Church found it hard to take the Incarnation quite seriously. How strange that the Lord of all should be 'compassed with infirmity'! Yet we must understand our Lord's weakness in strength, we must admit a veritable *kenosis* (emptying),[2] if His humanity is

[1] See Nevius's *Demon Possession* (F. H. Revell)—a scientific record and study of modern manifestations of this kind in China.

[2] This theological term reproduces the language of St. Paul in Philippians ii. 7—He 'emptied Himself' (A.V. 'made Himself of no reputation'). The Greek verb, which occurs five times in Paul's Epistles, always means 'to make empty' or 'void.' The context shows in each case *of what* the subject in question is emptied. Now the connexion of vv. 6 and 7 compels us to understand that our Lord 'emptied Himself,' not of mere 'reputation' (the old rendering is a natural softening of St. Paul's painfully strong expression), but of what belonged to His proper 'equality with God,' 'emptied Himself of all but love' (C. Wesley).

to preserve its reality for us, if we are to apprehend the love which stooped from the throne of God to man's estate. This glorious abdication, beginning with the Virgin's womb and the manger-cradle and ending with the cross and the grave, won for the Son of God the kingdom that He rules from 'the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.' Let us observe two conspicuous elements in our Lord's abasement which have contributed in different ways to His exaltation and authority.[1]

He declined *secular power.* On His trial before the representative of the Caesars Jesus protested, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' He submitted to Pilate's misused 'authority' as 'given him from above.' To those who craftily would have drawn Him into conflict with the civil State, Jesus replied in the famous aphorism: 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' Though allowing Himself to be hailed as 'Son of David,' He refused the crown offered by the Galilean patriots. The possibility of attaining His kingdom by political means was early presented to the mind of Jesus; He repelled it as an instigation of Satan. The existing civil and ecclesiastical institutions, corrupt as they were, He left undisturbed. The judgements He pronounced upon His nation and

[1] 'For supreme Spirit subject was to clay,
And Law from its own servants learned a law,
And Light besought a lamp unto its way,
And Awe was reined in awe,
At one small house of Nazareth;
And Golgotha
Saw Breath to breathlessness resign its breath,
And Life do homage for its crown to death.'

(Lines of Francis Thompson, quoted in this connexion by H. R. Mackintosh.)

its leaders were called forth by their religious apostasy, to which He traced all their miseries.

The like abstention appears in our Lord's reply to one who asked Him to interpose in a case of disputed property: 'Man,' He cries, 'who appointed me judge or divider over you?' Such arbitration lay outside His province. Questions of worldly goods and gear are as nothing by the side of those touching the soul and God, with which He is occupied. The secular order in which He moved, however bad in its conditions, nevertheless afforded room for the planting of the 'life' He came to impart; He accepted those conditions, and worked under them as they stood. He infused the 'leaven,' and left it to assimilate and recreate 'the lump.'

This resolute abstinence from secular action—our Lord's political *kenosis*, we may call it—scandalized His contemporaries. It affronted patriotic sentiment, and for the time destroyed the authority of Jesus amongst His people. To His best disciples it was a severe trial. In this 'meek and lowly' Jesus dreaming of a mystical kingdom where He will reign over those who are 'of the truth,' how should they see the wielder of David's sword, the Messiah-judge proclaimed by the Baptist, plying the winnowing fan and the smiting axe in the high places of iniquity? On His definite rejection of the national crown, the bulk of the Galilean disciples abandoned Jesus. No Son of David could tolerate the Roman tax-gatherer, or let His brave Forerunner fall, unavenged, at the hands of Herod Antipas! That He finally submitted, tame and helpless, to be gibbeted by Caiaphas and Pilate—here was proof of the utter weakness of Jesus and the hollowness of His pretensions. Such, doubtless, was the con-

clusion of many whom His teaching and miracles had inclined to faith. Until His resurrection, the few who still clung to Him had no reply. The authority of Jesus, to all appearance, was shattered beyond remedy.

7. Our Lord suffered a limitation in *knowledge* as well as power—an intellectual *kenosis* that touched Him more inwardly than the political. Omnipotence was swaddled by Mary's hands, was nailed to the cross of shame; Omniscience went to school in the synagogue, and cried to God in darkness from the cross, 'Why hast Thou forsaken Me?' This inner humiliation supplies the stone of stumbling to later disciples. For mental limitations bring into question the competence of the teacher; if the Master of truth fail us (as we suppose) in one point, however trifling or outlying, we are ready to distrust Him in all.

And yet it is evident, when we consider it, that as a child of man, entering our life in good earnest and not in make-believe, Jesus Christ was bound to have His horizon. He was a Jew of Palestine, born under Augustus Caesar and brought up at Nazareth. This environment, in which He recognized the Father's providence, affected His thought while it circumscribed His work. Our Lord exhibited powers of perception and foresight which His disciples came to regard as nothing less than Divine—He knew the mind of God, He read the souls of men like an open book. That He was, when He lived and moved amongst them, absolutely *omniscient*, no one imagined. He slept and waked, He observed and questioned, He reasoned and reflected, like another man; He walked by faith; He had surprises and disappointments, and moments of suspense; He passed through moods of joy and dread, of vision

and eclipse; He 'learned by what He suffered,' and 'was tempted in all points' like ourselves. His anointing with the Spirit brought a signal change to Jesus, the unfolding of powers and purposes latent hitherto; but to suppose He then cast aside all that is finite in intelligence and stepped completely out of His human horizon, is an unnatural conjecture and at variance with the facts. His subsequent temptation sufficiently disproves any such presumption. On one point of extreme interest touching His kingdom our Lord confesses Himself in the dark, although the Son of the All-wise and deeper in His counsels than 'the angels' (see Mark xiii. 32, Matt. xxiv. 36; cf. Acts i. 7): He 'knows not the day and hour' of His return. Such nescience implies a world of things hidden from His gaze—a background of shadow, such as all human knowledge carries with it; in the hour of death this shadow was allowed to thrust itself, for one frightful moment, between the Son of His love and the eternal Father!

With human science our Lord never intermeddled, any more than with property or politics. He had far higher truth to teach; and all the science of the ages one would count but loss for the excellency of His knowledge. He looked on the face of nature with the naive delight of the child of the Galilean hills, reading there the revelation of His Father's goodness, who 'maketh His sun to rise upon the evil and the good.' He speaks without the slightest trace of scientific reflection; His mind is enrapt in the religious contemplation of the world's order and beauty. The gracious words just quoted have been turned, alas! into an instrument of persecution. Papal inquisitors and Protestant theologians, on the strength of them, anathematized the great thinkers

who demonstrated the rotation of the earth, men whose reasonings they had not the patience to master or the wit to comprehend. Astronomy, geology, biology, one after another, have been banned in the name of Christ and Scripture; the God-directed march of knowledge has been vainly defied, and the authority of Christ presumptuously compromised, in jealousy for His honour. 'The Conflict between Religion and Science' is a melancholy chapter in the history of human thought; high time that it were closed!

Those past encounters afford the Church matter for reflection, in view of the relations between historical science and traditional theology at the present day. Not that we suggest a capitulation to Modernism—the surrender to any and every theory which presents itself in the name of science—far indeed from that; but we do plead that science must be met upon its own ground, that criticism can only be repelled by sounder and better criticism, and that the day is past for repressing inquiry by texts of Scripture. It is a most precarious thing to quote the words of our Lord upon side-issues, and in application to matters foreign to His intention.[1] Have we the right, for example, to assume that by His citation of the book of Jonah Jesus meant to decide that the story is matter-of-fact and not parable? or that, in referring to the Pentateuch and the Isaianic prophecies under their usual titles, He foreclosed the question of single or multiple authorship? Jesus Christ has guaranteed the tradition of the Scribes on these extraneous matters as little as He guaranteed the Ptolemaic

[1] See Chapter II., on 'The Illegitimate Extension of Christ's Authority,' in Dr. D. W. Forrest's very able book on *The Authority of Christ.*

astronomy by His reference to the sunrise. The mind of the Redeemer was engaged with problems infinitely more serious. Had He been appealed to on such difficulties, His reply might well have been: 'Render unto Science the things that are Science's, and unto God the things that are God's.'

8. The authority of Jesus Christ was vindicated, and permanently established, by *His Resurrection and Ascension, and the consequent effusion of the Holy Spirit.* 'By the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured out this'—so St. Peter interpreted the scene of Pentecost. God by one stupendous act had reversed the judgement of the world upon Jesus Christ, had endorsed His utmost claims and put His own seal for ever on the authority of the Redeemer. The Ascension, as the Apostles understood it, completed the Resurrection (see Ephesians i. 19–23); and the descent of the Spirit proved that the risen Christ had attained the seat of Divine power. Henceforth He is known and worshipped as 'Jesus Christ our Lord.'

During the last days of His ministry our Lord had spoken in a double strain, dwelling in the loftiest style upon His future glory—the 'kingdom' He is to rule, the 'thrones' His servants will occupy by His side, the appearing of 'all nations' at His tribunal—while at the same time He foretold the ignominious death awaiting Him. Now the contradiction is solved; the disciples learn that the cross is the way to the crown for Jesus, that His shameful death is His peculiar glory. The Resurrection has transformed the emblem of ignominy, helplessness, and defeat into the ensign of world-dominion. To this effect during the Forty Days Jesus explained what

had happened: 'Was not the Christ bound to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?'

With sin expiated and death abolished, in His new sovereignty Jesus directs that 'repentance unto remission of sins be preached in His name among all the nations.' In two specific functions the authority of the exalted Christ, as bearing on the life of mankind, practically centres: *the forgiveness of sins*, and *the bestowment of the Holy Spirit*—the topics that engrossed His post-resurrection discourse. By these means His revelation of the Father will be carried on and made effectual; by these means, operating in the testimony of His servants, His kingdom is to be spread throughout the earth. No weapons beside these may it employ. The 'authority over all flesh' which God conferred upon Him and which He has secured through pain and death, has this for its sole end, 'that He may give eternal life to all the Father hath given Him' (John xvii. 2, 3).

Under this commission Jesus Christ 'sends forth' His messengers, 'even as the Father had sent' Him. In parting, He bids them 'Go and make disciples of all the nations,' investing them with a ministry wide as the purpose of His own mission. For Himself, the limits of the incarnate state are gone. The Son of God returns to the glory He had with the Father 'before the world was,' rich in the added glory of His sufferings. Jesus is lifted above the bonds of space, above the bounds of time. 'All authority,' He proclaims, 'hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. . . . And lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

9. Our Lord Jesus Christ is thus seen to occupy a double throne. He rules *humanly and divinely*, intimately and transcendently, from within and

from above—at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and in the hearts of believing men.

The evil He came to destroy is rooted in the spirit of men; 'out of the heart proceed,' said He, 'evil thoughts,' with all their criminal and pernicious train. In the heart, to begin with, He must reign if anywhere, thence expelling 'the Prince of this world'; 'the kingdom of God is within you.' Jesus Christ rules as the Vine in the branches, the Head in the limbs. His empire, in contrast with that of Rome, being 'not of this world' and having for its subjects 'those who are of the truth' and 'hear His voice,' it was brought into being as a manifest and efficient sovereignty by the coming of the Holy Ghost. The reporter of the words of Matthew xvi. 28 did not travel beyond the intention of Jesus when he represented Him as saying, 'There are some of those standing here, who shall in no wise taste of death, until they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom': at the next Pentecost the prediction was fulfilled. This nearer 'coming' stood, to the thoughts of Jesus, in the foreground of His final Parousia, when He was to 'come,' for the conclusive act of world-judgement, 'in the glory of His Father with His angels' (cf. the contrast of John v. 25 and 28, 29). As St. Paul interpreted His meaning (see 1 Cor. xv. 24), this latter event is not the inauguration but the consummation of the kingdom of the Redeemer, the signs of whose dominion are 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' 'If I by the Spirit of God am casting out the demons,' Jesus once said (Matt. xii. 28), 'then is the kingdom of God come upon you'; from the day of Pentecost forwards that kingdom is duly constituted, and its 'law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' is

in normal operation. Men had now learnt to 'say, *Jesus is Lord*, in the Holy Spirit.' St. Paul was entirely true to his Master's conception of the nature and working of His kingdom, and of the seat of its earthly authority: he unfolds the idea which St. John's Gospel, particularly in chaps. xiv.-xvii., very clearly reveals as in the mind of Jesus.

Enthroned in the believing heart, our Lord reaches out His sceptre over the life of mankind; the 'hidden leaven' gradually assimilates 'the whole' kneading of humanity. In such measure as the branches and limbs of Christ—the men of His Spirit, who constitute the veritable Church—are multiplied and spread through the earth, and come to control its resources, and as they are brought into stricter co-operation with Himself and with each other for the ends of His mission, Christ's dominion is increasingly realized throughout the life of nations; so the true Christendom is built up. No 'establishment' of His religion is to the purpose, which is in any wise distinct from or extends beyond the sway of His Spirit amongst living men. The Apocalyptic vision of 'the kingdom of the world' transformed into 'the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ,' anticipates the fulfilment of His parting word, that 'all the nations' be 'made His disciples' and 'taught to observe all things' He 'had commanded.' For communities and kingdoms, as for individual men, there is no way of salvation but discipleship to Jesus Christ.

The authority of Jesus Christ is identical with that of the Spirit of God over the spirit of man; in its external operations and matter-of-fact issues it is thus determined and delimited. His kingdom is entered through the path of penitence and the

gate of faith; its service is rendered in the loyalty of love and the ardour of hope. 'I in them' was the last word of His prayer for mankind. 'I in them, and Thou in Me,' our Lord had just before testified to the Father (John xvii. 23, 26). There lies the secret, twofold and yet one, of His lordship, which is the sovereign fact of human history. Jesus Christ rules us as He lives in us; He lives in us, since God eternally lives in Him.

III

THE PERMANENT VALUE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

WILFRID J. MOULTON, M.A.

CHRISTIANITY is an historical religion. It stands or falls with the truth of the assertion that, in the Person of Jesus, God Himself entered into human history and wrought for mankind a great work of redemption. In the long run, there are two ways of thinking of religion on the part of those who accept the theistic explanation of the universe. The first of these conceives of the religious progress of humanity as a slow, upward striving towards God, not undirected by His immanent power, not unmarked by times of great energy and sudden development, but yet on the whole a process from within to without. This view is strikingly expressed by Bousset when he speaks of our belief in 'a God who is a God of order, and not of chaos, in a God who has woven the weft of this world so skilfully and securely that it never needs correction, in a God who in the great orderly march onwards through the apparently pitiless struggle for existence is leading the generations of living beings to a higher stage.'[1]

The other view does not deny or minimize the

[1] *What is Religion?* p. 285.

rich elements of truth in this conception; but it maintains that it gives a partial and inadequate explanation of the facts of life and religion. A deeper reading of history reveals not less of man's search for God, but assuredly more of God's search for man. It shows the ever-growing self-disclosure made by God to man; but it shows also that, right through human history, God was preparing the way for His own supreme intervention in the Person of His Son, so that the life of Jesus was not only, as is so often said, 'the high-water mark of a life-stream which is always flowing,' but the pouring into humanity of the river of life itself, in Him who alone can say, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.'

It is not unfair to say that our ultimate judgement of the Old Testament will be profoundly affected by our attitude to these conflicting views. Whatever we make of Jesus, the spiritual value of many of the Psalms and much of the prophets may remain unimpaired. The purity of their aspirations, the poignancy of their prayers, the sublimity of their trust, will rouse our consciences and move our hearts. Such passages can never fade from memory so long as human spirits are athirst for God. But if, whilst God has spoken and still speaks in many ways—in nature, in providence, and in conscience—there is to be discerned one broad and shining track, brightening towards the perfect day of the gospel, which marks the presence of the living God in the life of mankind, then the country through which that path runs must always be the Holy Land of all who believe in Christ.

Such convictions do not debar us from listening to all that modern knowledge, whether in history or in literary criticism, has to teach us.

Nor may they be used in support of any preconceived theory as to how the revelation of God was conveyed to man, or preserved for his future guidance. But they lead us to turn the pages of the Old Testament with deepening reverence. Here, where our Lord Himself found light for His path and strength for His mission; here, where so many of earth's noblest and wisest children have found God and communed with Him, we too take off the shoes from our feet, for the ground upon which we are treading is holy.

In the essay that follows we inquire, first, as to the permanent truths which mankind has learnt from the Old Testament; then we go on to consider the use and enrichment of these truths in the New Testament; finally we proceed to estimate the changes caused by modern knowledge in our appreciation of the casket in which the truths are stored.

II

To the question as to what are the great and permanent thoughts which we have received from the Old Testament the answer is not far to seek.

(*a*) In the Old Testament we find with growing clearness the realization of God as one, holy, personal Being, the righteous Creator and Controller of the universe. It is a task of surpassing interest to trace the growth of this faith from the day when Moses declared to his people that Jehovah, in His grace and pity, had chosen them for Himself, to the time when the final consequences of that choice were disclosed, in the world-embracing hope and faith of the later prophets. Again and again in the intervening period the real meaning of the national faith was

obscured. But in the end it triumphed, and has been passed on to us as our inalienable possession. Through the Old Testament we have learnt the truth so nobly proclaimed in the Jewish Prayer-book: 'He is One, and there is no second to compare to Him, to consort with Him: Without beginning, without end: to Him belong strength and dominion: And He is my God—my Redeemer liveth—and a rock in my travail in time of distress; and He is my banner and my refuge, the portion of my cup on the day when I call.' We are too much preoccupied with the minor and subordinate question as to the precise time at which this faith rose to a full ethical Monotheism. The real wonder and miracle is that Monotheism ever emerged at all. Whilst all the noblest teachers of the non-Hebrew world faltered, hardly approaching, or even discerning, this supreme height, Amos and Isaiah and Jeremiah and the rest found God, or were found by Him, and their faith is ours to-day.

(*b*) From the Old Testament we have learnt the true meaning of holiness. In tracing out this idea also we have a long and intricate story to unravel. We pass through the stage where a man is regarded, not as a person, but as an appendage to some one else—the subject to the ruler, the child to the father, the wife to the husband, the slave to the master. We mark the time when no clear line was drawn between the ritual and the moral. We see things done in the name of God, by those who believed that they had His warrant for their actions, which we, following the example of our Lord, condemn as belonging to an age of darkness and hardness of heart. But always, as the sense of the awful holiness of God burnt itself in upon the conscience, those who knew Him best declared

that His real demands were for righteousness and brotherly kindness. Amos proclaiming God's judgement against the nations for crimes against common humanity—Isaiah pleading for justice to the poor and the helpless—Jeremiah with his deep sense of the root of evil in the heart, and its need of cleansing—the Psalmists with their perceptions that God desires truth in the inward parts; these show the way by which we have learnt, once and for ever, that religion and morality are bound together by indissoluble ties. And still the village prophet's summary of duty, 'to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God,' remains our ideal and our goal.

(*c*) Again, we find in the Old Testament the growing sense of need that God Himself should intervene to lift men up to the fellowship with Himself for which they had been made, and which no system of sacrifice and ritual, and no personal strivings, had been able to secure. We cannot here enter upon the history of all that is included under the phrase—'The Messianic Hope.' We see it in the yearnings for the Righteous King of David's line; we find it in Jeremiah's vision of the time when God's law should be written on the tables of the heart, and all alike should know Him. We see the longing intensified as the problem of human suffering pressed for solution, and the hope grew that somehow, through the undeserved travail and pain of the righteous, the kingdom of God would be brought in. We read it in Daniel's vision of the kingdom of the saints, coming with the clouds of heaven. We cannot miss the fact that the Old Testament calls aloud for some fuller manifestation of God.

These ideas then—of God, of man, and of God's reign—come to us from the Old Testament. It

has been well said that 'they have become so familiar to the religious thought of Western civilization that it is difficult to realize their greatness—until we remember that our very familiarity with them is a spiritual debt to Israel through Christianity, and the best proof of their epoch-making significance.' [1]

III

As we pass from the Old Testament into the New we are at once arrested by the use made by our Lord of the earlier writings. To Him the Old Testament was His strong weapon of defence against the assaults of the Tempter. To it He turned in every solemn moment of His life. At His baptism the revelation came in Old Testament words; in Gethsemane and on the cross the words of the stricken Psalmists of olden times expressed the anguish of His soul.

The great ideas of which we have spoken supplied the foundation of His teaching. The God whom He proclaimed was the living, personal, holy God of old. But these thoughts were enriched by the grand thought of the universal Fatherhood; the Holy One of Israel became the gracious Father of all mankind.

He spoke in grave and earnest tones of the need of holiness in man. When some leaders of the people had fallen back into the old confusion between the ritual and the moral, He swept away at one stroke every thought of righteousness that fell below the ethical. Moreover, He took the ancient ethical demands and so deepened their meaning, as He probed into the darkest hiding-places of sin, that the stern commands of the

[1] Wheeler Robinson, *Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 223.

Decalogue flash upon us with new and blinding splendour.

But above all, He took the ancient hope of the Kingdom, and claimed that it was now fulfilled in His own Person. With His coming the Kingdom was a present reality, even though its consummation lay in the future. All that prophets and righteous men had longed for in the past was now revealed to His disciples. Hence the most notable fact in our Lord's use of the Old Testament is that He found there the prophecy of His own mission. In His words to the messengers of the Baptist He pointed back to the glowing picture of Isaiah xxxv. When He applied to John the words of Malachi, and called him the messenger who was to prepare the way, He saw in His own coming God's visitation of His people; the intervention of God, so long desired and dreamed of, had now become a fact. The more these claims are considered, the more wonderful do they become, whilst they disclose, with marvellous clearness, our Lord's own estimate of the place of the Old Testament in the history of redemption.

Yet, side by side with this, we note with what sovereign freedom our Lord criticizes and casts aside what was merely temporary in the older dispensation. 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth,' said the ancient law, spoken in the sacred name of Jehovah Himself. 'But I say unto you,' said Jesus, and gave the rule of forgiveness and love. When the rules distinguishing between clean and unclean foods are given in Leviticus, they are introduced with the solemn words—'And Jehovah spake unto Moses and to Aaron.' Yet our Lord brushes all these laws away for ever with the great words which show that defilement comes from within, not from without.

It is very necessary to make clear to our minds what is the relation between such sayings and the great declaration—'I came not to destroy, but to fulfil,' enforced by the solemn warning that follows against breaking the least of the commandments (Matt. v. 17f). Two passages provide the clue we need. The first gives our Lord's discussion with the Pharisees about divorce. He puts away the Mosaic rule, with the comment that it was given because of the hardness of men's hearts. He recognizes that there was much in the Old Testament which belonged to an earlier stage of mora development, and must, therefore, be superseded. But, at the same time, He bids His hearers note that, if only they could penetrate to the ideal meaning of manhood and womanhood, which had been lodged for them in the story of the institution of marriage, they would find a principle sufficient for the answering of all their questions. May we not say that He turns away from the details, and bids us search for the deeper principles which form the soul of the Old Testament revelation?

Our second illustration may be taken from the story of the Last Supper. As we ponder that record we find distinct references to three great passages in the Old Testament. These are (1) the solemn covenant sacrifice recorded in Exodus xxiv., where the chosen people are set apart for God's own possession; (2) the crowning utterance of Jeremiah, where the new and inward covenant is proclaimed; and (3) the supreme Servant-passage in Isaiah, where the righteous bears the sins of the wicked and is made an offering for sin. These passages mark the summit of prophetic inspiration, and the central point of the work of Moses. No one had ever brought them together before, or seen how they were to be blended into a unity.

Jesus takes them all, with their differing modes of thought and expression, and makes them meet and fuse in His own Person, in the institution of that service wherein all the saving powers of His life and death are summed up and brought together, and graphically and really presented to us. That is surely how He fulfils the Scriptures. He found within them great thoughts of God struggling for expression and waiting for realization. He disclosed their meaning and fulfilled their promise.

We may test this conclusion by considering the classical New Testament passage on inspiration contained in 2 Timothy iii. 15–17. There it is stated that the Old Testament is a collection of sacred writings, 'God-inspired,' i.e. with the Spirit of God breathing through them. These books are able to make wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. They had pointed to Him, in Him they had been fulfilled, and in His light they must be read. They are designed to meet the wants of the moral and spiritual life of men, and, as completed in Christ, they are adequate for that purpose. How such a claim was applied we may discover by Paul's use of the Old Testament. Like his Master he brushed aside the ritual law, and gloried in his freedom from it. Like his Master, he went behind the letter in the search for the spirit. As Jesus went back to the story of Eden, to discover a deeper principle than the law could show, so Paul turned back to the call of Abraham, to find there the principle of God's free and gracious promise in Christ. The law, he argues, was needful in its own age. In the moral discipline of humanity, and in the training of the conscience, it fulfilled its office and prepared the way for the gospel. But the part of the Old Testa-

ment that fills his mind with adoring gratitude is that which reveals the principle of God's dealings with men, a principle which is unalterable in essence and can never be superseded.

Whilst we thus lay such emphasis on principles we do not lose sight of the fact that these principles were revealed, for the most part, through real acts of God and real events in history. Paul's glorying in the past of his race, and our Lord's constant references to the men who had spoken for God and heard His voice in Old Testament days, assure us that they believed that a real revelation was made in the history of Israel. To that belief we hold fast.

But the question is still left entirely open to what extent the records of the history are free from error. The strongest opponent of the prevailing critical views of the Old Testament, Dr. Orr, is quite explicit on that point. He states that the inspiration in which Paul believed did not secure 'verbal inerrancy in ordinary historical, geographical, chronological, or scientific matters. But (1) it seems at least clearly implied that there was no error which could interfere with or nullify the utility of Scripture for the ends specified; and (2) the qualities which inspiration is said to impart to Scripture, rendering it profitable in so great and rich a degree, make it clear that the inspiration itself was of a high and exceptional character.'[1] It is probably in the application of the first of these canons that most of our modern difficulties are found. In the later part of this essay an attempt is made to show the bearing of Biblical criticism and modern knowledge in general upon the use of this criterion.

[1] *Revelation and Inspiration*, p. 162.

IV

In the early centuries of Christianity its defenders had a twofold task: (1) To the Greek they sought to show that the new faith was not a thing of yesterday, but as old as the counsels of God. In quite another sense from Tindal, they sought to prove 'Christianity as old as the Creation.' (2) To the Jew they had to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and that His followers were the true inheritors of all the ancient promises.

Whilst there is much of permanent value in the work of the early apologists, which sometimes glows with burning fervour as the writers record their own experiences of a present salvation, it is often vitiated for us by their strange misuse of parts of the Old Testament. In the days of our Lord the theory had already been formed which was to bind with such grievous chains the consciences of so many of His followers. Springing in part from the noble heroism displayed in the time of the Maccabean wars in defence of their sacred writings, the idea had grown up that these writings must be perfect, incapable of error, absolutely binding in all their parts, a finished whole to which nothing could be added, and from which nothing could be subtracted. How far removed our Lord Himself was from such an estimate, we have already seen. Yet many of the Christian apologists adopted it as their own, sought to solve their problems by its means, and passed it on to their descendants. Justin is perhaps the most striking illustration of this attitude. He set out to prove 'that all things prophesied of the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; and, secondly, that every-

thing which befel Jesus was prophesied of the Messiah.'[1]

When we consider how our Lord Himself had repudiated all that was national and revengeful in these ancient hopes, we see how futile such efforts were. Some of the immediate consequences are still admonitory. Marcion, missing altogether the thought of development, which had hardly dawned on the thought of the Church, and insisting upon dealing with the Old Testament as a whole, and not with a selection of chosen texts, found no other course open to him than to reject it altogether. Writers like Origen found relief in the free use of allegory. The age of historical criticism had not yet come. But the Church as a whole, convinced that, whoever was right, Marcion was wrong, certain that the Creator-God of Israel was the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and still not ready for the broader view, settled down to an estimate of Scripture which was essentially Jewish and not Christian.

We cannot stay to outline the growth of the theory which in course of time came to use the Old Testament as an infallible guide in science and in history. The condemnation of the teaching of Copernicus and the imprisonment of Galileo are familiar instances of the consequences. Yet indications are not wanting of a truer understanding. Galileo's famous saying that the Bible was not given to us to show us how the heavens go, but to show us how to go to heaven, shines out as a light in a dark place, and shows how the real meaning of the Scriptures lived on in faithful hearts. Luther, in his Table-talk, shows how really he had

[1] Glover, *Conflict of Religions*, p. 183. Many examples of such exegesis are given by Mr. Glover in chap. vi.

appreciated our Lord's use of Scripture. 'If,' says he, speaking of the Bible, 'sometimes there mingled in it hay, straw, wood, and not solely silver, gold, and precious stones, nevertheless the foundation abides while the fire consumes the rest.' So Richard Baxter writes, that to deny all 'signs of imperfection' in the Bible is one of the instances of 'overdoing' 'which tempt men to infidelity.' Later still, John Wesley sweeps away at a stroke the futile attempts to make the unconscious and direct statements of the Old Testament square with the conclusions of science. He writes: 'Nor is the motion of the earth, whatever is vulgarly supposed, contrary to any part of the Scripture. No other ideas are to be affixed to the words of Scripture than such as occur to one who looks at the thing spoken of. By the sun's rising, therefore, when mentioned in Scripture we are to understand no more than the sun's appearing again in the horizon, after he had been hid below it; and, by his setting, his ceasing to appear. And when the sun and moon are said to stand still, it means only that they did not change their situation in respect of the earth; that the sun appeared still just over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Ajalon.'[1]

Such sayings as these show how those who had penetrated most nearly to the heart of the gospel had learnt the true use of the Bible. Yet on the whole Christendom fell back on the outworn, Judaistic, and mechanical view of an errorless record, authoritative in every syllable. Once more John Wesley may be quoted against such an impossible view. In his note on the first verse of St. Matthew's Gospel he meets at once the ancient difficulty that the genealogies in the first

[1] *Survey of the Wisdom of God*, vol. iii., pp. 6–7.

Gospel and the third do not agree. He remarks: 'If there were any difficulties in this genealogy, or that given by St. Luke, which could not easily be removed they would rather affect the Jewish Tables than the credit of the Evangelists; for they act only as historians, setting down these genealogies as they stood in those public and allowed records. Therefore, they were to take them as they found them. Nor was it needful they should correct the mistakes, if there were any. For these accounts sufficiently answer the end for which they are recited. . . . And they had more weight with the Jews for this purpose, than if alterations had been made by inspiration itself. For such alterations would have occasioned endless disputes between them and the disciples of our Lord.'

If only the sterling common sense of such words had been appreciated we might have been spared many wearisome attempts at harmonizing obvious contradictions, and have had more leisure to study the real, inner meaning of Scripture. But the Church needed a sterner discipline, and was called upon to pass through a searching trial, before it was ready to draw the full consequences of such lessons.

V

This trial came with the imperious challenge of the new knowledge of the past half-century, that the followers of Jesus should submit their faith to the test of criticism. Physical Science took its pen in hand and rewrote the story of the world in which we live; Anthropology rolled back the curtain, and revealed the long ages since man first appeared upon the earth; Archae-

ology opened up the records of nations which were already ancient when Abraham came forth from Ur: Historical Science arrived with an altogether new conception of history, and fresh standards of credibility. Many devout readers of the Bible, who had found in its sacred pages light and strength and healing, watched with indignation and dismay the application of the results of these new sciences to the statements it contained. To some it seemed as though the flood-gates were opened and a flood of devastating infidelity was pouring in. Yet in the history of the Church there was a lesson that might have brought comfort and hope. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we see a Jewish community threatened with the loss of all it had held most sacred. If the Holy City was to be destroyed and the temple ritual to cease, what was left of God's ancient covenant with Israel? The noble answer, given in words of glowing eloquence, is familiar to us all. The things that could be shaken would pass away. But when the trouble and the travail were past, God's own abiding city, resting on its sure foundations, would remain, and the faithful would have their place in an unshaken realm. We may claim that such a shaking has been going on in our own day. Yet the loyal disciples of Jesus may see more clearly than ever the unshaken truths of God's constant self-revelation, which are enshrined in the Bible.

To see how this has come to pass we must learn the lessons of Historical Criticism as applied to the Old Testament. To many, the new light which it has brought shows that it has been given, in the Providence of God, just when it was most needed, to enable them to receive with thankfulness all the fresh discoveries of science and yet to see, with new wonder and reverence, that their

Lord and Saviour is still the key to the world's history and the answer to its needs. Those who trace all knowledge to the Spirit of Him who is Himself the Truth, may see His guiding hand in such criticism as is reverent and devout.

We may briefly summarize the proofs of a statement which may appear both startling and paradoxical to some who would fain remain in the old paths.

(*a*) With regard to *Science* the possibility of contradiction has been swept away for ever. As the quotation from John Wesley showed, the Bible writers looked on the facts of nature and described what they saw. The futility of supposing that such observations ought to be reconciled with modern knowledge is obvious. If our grandfathers had been able to prove that Genesis agreed with science as they knew it, then it is plain that, if they were right, Genesis must contradict the science of the twentieth century. If we could prove triumphantly that our present-day scientific conceptions are found there, then the next generation, with the new thoughts that are sure to come, would find itself confronted once more by the old difficulty. But there is more to be said than this. Archaeology has shown us the relationship between the early stories of Genesis and those of other races. In the stories of the Creation and the Deluge found on the Babylonian tablets, we read some of the earliest traditions of our race, and understand how men long before the days of Abraham had asked the eternal questions, and framed explanations of the phenomena of life. Yet a comparison between these stories and the Bible narratives reveals with startling clearness the differences. Who taught the Hebrew writers to purge away all the gross and polytheistic

notions of Babylonia? Whose breath is it that breathes through these chapters, so that the reverent reader still meets God as he lingers over their pages? What causes the difference of temper so marked that a blind man must perceive it? There is but one answer. It is the work of the Spirit of God.

To put the same truth in another way, we may say that the devout believer looks at nature from another standpoint than that of the scientific observer. He knows that God is in all things, and therefore he declares that—'in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' God, remaining in Himself the fountain of being, and abiding still the unchanged and eternal One, is the cause and origin of all this wondrous universe. Hence all thoughts of materialism or dualism are for ever excluded. Moreover, whilst he knows that on one side of his being man is related to physical nature, he knows also, from his own spiritual experience, that he is akin to God, created to have fellowship with Him, capable of moral choice, subject to moral discipline.

All these thoughts spring out to meet us from the opening chapters of Genesis, and confront us everywhere throughout the Old Testament. Through what stages the earth passed before it became the home of man; what took place during the stages of preparation in the slow evolution of man's physical and mental constitution; what are the links of connexion between him and the rest of the creation—these are the questions that science seeks to answer, and has, in part, learnt to answer. But with such questions the Bible has nothing to do. Its work was rather 'to speak in general terms of the deepest part of the truth, to illustrate that truth by some forms of speech which may

remain, not only true, but also credible through all the diversities of intelligence which belong to different times and to different classes of men. This is exactly what our Book has done.' [1]

Is it not clear that, in speaking thus, we are applying our Lord's own method in His use of the Old Testament? Like Him we are going behind the formal statement to find the underlying principles. With Him we find that God has in very truth spoken to men in the past, and discover that the truths which they learnt through His Spirit are of permanent validity and of priceless value.

(*b*) With regard to *History*, modern criticism shows us, in a far more convincing manner, the development of God's dealings with Israel. In the first place, by examining the three collections of books which make up the Hebrew Bible—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—it has thrown a flood of new light on the national progress. Instead of putting the whole mass of legislation at the outset, in the days of Moses, it shows us how he was truly the first great legislator, who shaped the various and divided tribes into a nation and bound them to their covenant-God.

But it proceeds to show that, right through the long history, the law was growing and continually evolving to meet new needs, until it crystallized at last in the completed system of the days of Nehemiah and Ezra. Hence we may trace the gradual education of the people by law and precept, and watch the law advancing side by side with the developing history. Is it not clear that this is pure gain? Once it was thought that God gave in one man's life-time all the laws that were needful for the many centuries of the nation's life. Manifold perplexities arose so soon as one asked

[1] Waggett, *The Scientific Temper in Religion*, p. 182.

how all this complicated and sometimes contradictory mass of laws could ever have been imposed upon one generation. Or again, the striking contrast between the history of the books of Judges or Samuel and the ideal presented in Leviticus and Numbers left us marvelling what had become of so many of the earlier laws. Once again, Jeremiah's declaration that God's message to the people who came out of Egypt had nothing to do with burnt-offerings or sacrifices (vii. 22), and Ezekiel's outline of legislation for the community restored from the Exile, made us ask in wonder how these great prophets could ignore a system which had been completed so many centuries before their day. But now much that was so dark becomes luminous. Prophets and priests were working together, however widely the paths they traced seemed to diverge, to form the people from whom in the fullness of the time Christ was to come forth.

But there is more to be said than this. Historical criticism guides us in our treatment of many of the Bible narratives by revealing to us their true place in the world's literature. On the one hand, it does much to confirm the general trustworthiness of the history by setting it in the framework formed by the life of other ancient peoples. We gratefully acknowledge the light that has been cast on many dark passages in the prophets since we have learnt to read the records of the Monuments and to see how the world-politics of Egypt and Assyria and Babylon influenced the little land of Palestine, lying midway between these great empires. But, on the other hand, criticism teaches us that no ancient literature is to be judged by modern historical standards. To suppose that these existed so many centuries ago is as much an anachronism as to suppose that

modern science had any being in those far-off days.

We have learnt to see how all ancient writers adopted freely the traditions and stories which were current amongst the people, and incorporated them into their own work. We have no reason to suppose that the writers of the Bible were exceptions, or that they were supernaturally guided to employ modern methods in the records they have left us. The illustration from Wesley's comment on the genealogies of our Lord shows how he had grasped this principle. Dr. W. B. Pope expresses the same thought when he says that the Bible 'is silent as to science . . . and quotes and admits records as testimony without pledging itself to their truth.'[1]

We who have learnt so much from the parables of our Lord ought not to stumble at this. The main outlines of the history are clear and unmistakable. But the Bible writers took the traditions of their own day and used them to enforce the teaching about God and His claims which they knew had come from Himself. The value of historical criticism lies in showing that, *in form*, the Bible books are like other writings of their period. We see that God was using, as surely He always has done, the forms of thought and knowledge which belonged to the age in which He spoke, in order to express through them His higher meaning. But the spirit of the Old Testament writings, their attitude to sin, their stern insistence on the supreme claims of God, lift them far above all other contemporary writings. It may be long before we have learnt to apply this principle wisely. We need the utmost caution in denial, the fullest patience and forbearance towards

[1] *Compendium of Christian Theology*, p. 79.

one another as we draw out the inferences. But, in the long run, we are convinced that such an understanding will relieve the Christian conscience of many needless burdens, and pave the way for a truer appreciation of God's working.

VI

What, then, is the Old Testament? It is the record of man's experience of God, vouchsafed by Him in the history of Israel. It is the story of the way in which men who had heard the voice of God tried to interpret life and history and the world around them, in the new light that had come to them. It shows, with startling frankness, how often they misunderstood Him. Then, as now, a real experience of God did not make men infallible in judgement, any more than it made them flawless in conduct. It is strange that we should ever have argued for a theory which supposed that the Spirit of God saved men from intellectual error, whilst He did not avail to save them from sinning! All the emphasis that Scripture lays upon the moral side of life, all its teaching as to the vanity of merely secular knowledge, speak against such a view. But through all sin and error the Old Testament shows us the wrestling of God with the men whom He had chosen for Himself. It gives manifold foreshadowings of the full glory that was revealed in Christ. It is not an infallible text-book of knowledge that man may find by his own faculties, the knowledge that is 'not intuition, but the slow, uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil.' But it is infallible as the guide furnished to bring us near to the God who has always been seeking and redeeming men.

There are times when we have asked for some-

thing more. Martineau's beautiful words echo the longing of many hearts: 'Yes: the heavenly essence in the earthen jar, the ethereal perfume in the tainting medium, the everlasting truth in the fragile receptacle—this is just the combination which does not content the weakness and self-distrust of men. They want not the treasure only, but the casket too, to come from the sky, and be of the crystal of the sky.'[1]

Yet history is full of lessons to teach us how often 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men.' When the last great word of God was spoken to our race, the Son of God was not revealed as a bright angelic being, but as 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' There were those in the past who sought to enhance His honour by denying the reality of His human body, even as some to-day count it a wrong to Him to confess that He had a human mind. Yet we know that it is through One who 'in the days of His flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears,' with all the marks upon Him of human weakness, that we have been brought to God. So, when St. Paul claimed to be the bearer of the good news of God's hidden mystery, now at last revealed, there were those to whom it seemed incredible that so grand a charge should have been committed to one whose form was so frail and buffeted, whose 'bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible.' Yet the great apostle gloried in his weakness, knowing that the poverty of the earthly vessel enabled it to display more brightly the surpassing wonder of God's power.

We are slowly learning to accept the Bible, not as we in our wilfulness would have had it,

[1] *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 288.

but as God in His wisdom has bestowed it. When we have learned this lesson, learned to say, 'Even so, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Thy sight,' we shall be able to hold to the Old Testament, and to prize it more than ever. It is the inspired Book of the nation which first learned to know the unity and holiness of God, and yearned for His reign. It is the Book of the people of whom, according to the flesh, Christ came. It strengthened His soul; it brings life and healing to ours. It is unique, as our Lord Jesus Christ is unique. And as we trace the footsteps of the living God in these ancient records and know through His Spirit's working that their pages are still aglow with His presence, we find Him entering also into our own inmost life.

IV

THE GOSPELS IN HISTORY AND IN LIFE

W. W. Holdsworth, M.A.

'That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows'

The discussion of the many questions which gather round the Christian Gospels is the cause of serious unrest and uncertainty. Such questions are inevitable if we would know the certainty of those things which we have believed; but, partly because of their complexity, and partly because of the scant leisure available for their study, investigation is at present confined to only a few. At the same time, the issues involved affect the strongest convictions and the deepest feelings of a vast number of people. They know that these inquiries deal with things which go to make up the deepest experience of their life, and they fear that in the process of investigation the foundations of their spiritual life may be injured, if not destroyed. It must be confessed, too, that unverified conclusions and hasty generalizations have sometimes been made, which have served to disturb and distress the minds of devout men and women, as they have also exposed to suspicion that passion for truth and that reverent investigation of the Christian records which offer to the trained, and also to the untrained, mind the substantial reward of a more assured basis for faith. We would say

at once that such unrest and distress of spirit are not justified by the conclusions which find general acceptance among those who accept the toil of digging down to the foundations of Christian faith; and it may be claimed with confidence that the general trend of criticism to-day is more in the direction of verifying, than of destroying, the assurance which has been born of the common life of the Church, and is nourished by that more personal experience which is the treasure of the individual heart.

But, whether this assurance be accepted or no, the fact remains that it is impossible to place the Scriptures beyond the reach of criticism. The spirit of the age demands that it see things as they are. With the increase of knowledge both freedom and power have increased their range, and in every department of life to-day men are demanding the right to examine the credentials of every claimant for their suffrage or their allegiance. To refuse this demand, in so far as the historical basis of the Christian faith is concerned, is to increase doubt and suspicion, and where one would by refusing entrench himself in his security, many scores would turn away from that which they were not allowed to test. There was a time when it was considered impious to apply Reason to Revelation. But the issue of that historical refusal is our warning to-day. The Gospels were reduced, in consequence, to the position of heathen oracles. They were used in the service of the grossest superstitions, and Christianity seemed likely to become the merest fetish. From this debasement it was delivered by the revival of learning, and by the application of the historical method to the Christian records. It will always appear to some that any such application

is not only unnecessary, but carries with it a certain amount of disparagement of the faith by which they live. The process seems to make Christianity merely human, and to class it with other objects which the human mind finds in the field of science; and the emphasis placed upon the method of research—an emphasis which is unavoidable, if the matter is to receive its meed of attention and exposition — increases that impression. A large proportion of the Christian community is content with an immediate and entirely personal experience. Those who are drawn by their own inclination, or compelled by personal responsibility, to investigate the conditions in which the records have acquired the authority which they now possess, will always hold such convictions of others in utmost reverence, and will be unwilling to utter one word which would seem to disparage the faith whose one foundation is that of a personal and spiritual experience.

But the argument from experience is one which is severely limited. Experience can never become universal in application. It will carry no conviction to some differing soul. It will be countered at once by the reflection that individualities differ, and that what approves itself to any one mind will not necessarily be acceptable to another. The immediate certainties of one mind will often appear to another as matter to be analysed, tested, and approved; the modern mind refuses to take anything 'on trust.' The perils of subjectivity, too, are considerable. Conceptions may easily gather round the great conclusion of our personal experience which are individual, and which may therefore be warped, imperfect, and even misleading. Religious life may become an unhealthy pietism; it may even be simulated by

the self-assertion of the egoist or the pretentiousness of the charlatan. Unguarded by criticism, it may disperse rather than unite. If ever the union of the dismembered sections of the Church be brought about, an ampler basis than that which is to be found either in dogma or experience must be sought and found. No one man is justified in imposing, as a test upon the faith of his neighbour, that particular form of Christological dogma which commends itself to him, or in making his reading of ecclesiastical history a condition of membership in the Christian Church. We need, then, to bring the personal experience which is always the basis of religious life into relation with what we know of revelation in the field of history. We must see whether the effect of a divine revelation to ourselves has a sufficient explanation to make it capable of a universal application to the spiritual life of man. We must verify the individual experience by 'the fact of Christ.'

Present controversies are due largely to a misconception of the terms 'revelation' and 'vehicle of revelation.' Religion is a relation of the human spirit to the Divine, and the Christian holds that this has been determined by the revelation which he finds in Jesus Christ. But directly he makes that statement he offers a challenge to history,—not, be it observed, because historical investigation has anything to do with the content of the revelation by which his own spirit has been affected, but because he has related that experience to a definite Person who appeared upon the plane of history, and whose deeds and words are on record in documents, which again have a history of their own. Those documents have become the vehicle of revelation, and, as documents, are subject to the tests which are

applied to all literature. To refuse to apply such tests is to empty the Gospels of all authority. A special emphasis must be laid upon this point, even at the risk of repetition, that the gospel-message is other than the four Gospels in which it is contained. The latter is but the earthen vessel in which the gospel of Salvation comes down to us. As such it will be handled with reverence. Anything like hastiness in drawing a conclusion—much more any flippancy in treatment—is contrary to the spirit in which serious literature should be discussed, and it becomes most reprehensible when we remember that the spiritual hopes and aspirations of countless thousands have gathered round these particular documents. But this reverential feeling must not obscure the fact that, after all, the several writings are human productions; and it is that which they contain and convey, rather than the books themselves, which form the content of revelation. Historical criticism has to do with the books, not with the revelation. The criteria by which we judge the latter are quite different from those which are applied in the practice of historical criticism; and if the latter makes it appear that such and such a passage was not written down by the original author of the book before us, or if we are convinced that any particular passage was the comment of an editor rather than the very words of Christ Himself, it is possible that the recognition of such facts, instead of weakening the sanctions which belong to Christ, may strengthen them.

The examination of the documents, then, may be pursued without fear, when we have made the always necessary distinction between the letter and the spirit. We shall not blindly swear to the former, but we shall question the several writers

as to their authority for the statements they make. We shall wish to know what experience they themselves had of the facts they record, and whether their own words have been accurately preserved, whether they have survived the vicissitudes which affect the history of all literary documents. When we are in a position to place these writings in the age to which they belong, thereby discovering to what extent the form in which they appear is due to the prevalent tendency of their age, we restore to the writings that which was undoubtedly theirs at the first; we make them, not lesson-books nor even manuals of devotion, but books which reflect life, and which are therefore the more likely to impress and regulate life in ourselves. We also secure the great advantage of meeting the adversary of Christianity on his own ground; we use weapons which he respects, and he will probably be impressed with the claims of that for which we contend when he sees that we have nothing to fear in submitting the Christian records to investigation. One is tempted to believe in the irony of fate when he considers how the historical investigation which has done so much to strengthen the claim of Christianity and which is capable of doing much more in the same direction, is regarded not merely with suspicion, but even with hostility. It would almost seem as if the Christian Church were in danger of rejecting the very help that it needs most, and at the very moment in which that help promises it the victory in its long struggle with scepticism. The tragedy of the past threatens us again, and the people of God know not the day of their visitation.

What are the facts before us in this question of the historical investigation of the Gospels?

Before an answer to this question is attempted a distinction must be drawn between the extreme and unauthorized statements made by individuals and that general consensus of opinion which commands respect as being based upon acknowledged facts. The former often attract attention by reason of their being extreme. Their authors put them before us with an emphasis, and often with an exaggeration, intended to secure for their views the attention of the public, and it is not difficult for the casual reader to receive the impression that the extreme view is that which receives a general acceptance in the world of criticism. The fact is, however, that the very opposite is the truth. The advocate of any new view knows how difficult it is to secure for his theory the acceptance of those who have held a contrary opinion, and many a theory, which has attracted the attention of those who have had no opportunity to examine the grounds upon which it rests, receives short shrift from scholars. The probability is that the brief life enjoyed by subversive theories would be briefer still, but for the exaggerated importance attached to them by those who take the loudly spoken word as representative or authoritative.

If we may then take for granted that by the term 'historical criticism' we understand that which has received a *general* acceptance among responsible scholars, we would claim that nowhere in the whole range of New Testament criticism are the assured results so much in favour of the confirmation of the Christian tradition as they are in the field of the four Gospels.

It is obvious that the authority of Christ, and His relevance to our life, finds its basis neither wholly in the sphere of personal experience nor

in the literary remains of the first century of our era, but rather in the combination of the two. The vindication of the Christian Church will be found in the identifying of the Christ of experience with the historical Jesus, as His personality is presented to us in the four Gospels. We can give no adequate account of Him until we have established the records by which we identify the Christ of God with Jesus of Nazareth. Now the materials for dealing with this question have increased to an extent little guessed at by those who cannot follow modern processes of investigation. From convents on Mount Sinai and from long-forgotten 'Egyptian rubbish-heaps' the toil and patience of investigators have procured for us the means of testing the value of our records in the light of history. Such means were not available for our fathers, and Christian scholars have set themselves laboriously to scrutinize this material, with a conscientiousness which should evoke the respect and gratitude of the Church. No one who is at all conversant with such work would claim finality for such conclusions as have been put forward—some of them in the most tentative way. The work is still in process, but that which has been gained makes entirely for securing a broader basis and a stronger foundation for Christian faith than at one time seemed possible. Having said so much, we may now pass on to consider the gains of criticism as far as the Gospels are concerned.

It was seen almost from the beginning that those Gospels which we call 'the Synoptic Gospels' were not independent productions, that they contained a large amount of common matter, and some attempt was made to remove what seemed mere repetition by the simple method of excision of what was held to be superfluous matter. That

effort, however, was very short-lived, and the fact that Tatian's *Diatessaron* disappeared from Church use by the second century shows the strength of the instinct which seeks to secure the original form of the record, rather than such forms as may be due to an individual feeling as to what was desirable. No attempt, however, was made to account for the interdependence of the three Gospels, or to discuss their relative positions in history. For many years the Church was content to accept them as they stood; and it was generally held that the order in which they made their appearance was that in which they now stand in the Christian Canon. The Church disregarded the fact that matter contained in one of the Gospels appeared in one or in both of the others, and Christian teachers spoke of the writings as though they were independent witnesses. Even when the expressions used were identical in form they claimed that the fact indicated a threefold testimony. The question whether the repetition did not indicate a single source rather than three sources was not raised. Most important of all is the question of the authority of the several Evangelists. Now St. Mark had not been a follower of Jesus, and St. Luke had joined the Apostle Paul only in the latter part of his ministry; but no attempt to answer the all-important question of the authority behind the writings, which these authors incorporated in their several Gospels, was made. Sufficient authority was conferred upon the Gospels by the mere fact of their inclusion in the Canon; this presumption was strengthened by the doctrine of verbal inspiration then almost universally held, and beyond this the Church did not go.

But it is evident now that such questions are vital to the authority of Scripture, and about the close of the eighteenth century attention began

to be turned to the Synoptic Gospels, chiefly in Germany. It was soon discovered that the historical relations of the three Gospels are exceedingly complicated, and that such references as are discovered in Patristic writings on the subject of Gospel Origins appear to be not only mutually destructive, but hard to reconcile with the internal evidence presented by the Gospels themselves. It soon became apparent that there is a very real 'Synoptic Problem,' and, though for a long time a solution seemed almost hopeless, scholars addressed themselves to the task with commendable patience and determination. It is not within the scope of this essay to discuss the many views that have been held, or to give any account of the method of criticism. We are concerned with the results of such work in making good the statement that historical criticism, so far from destroying that which is of value to the Church, has only served to make more valid the grounds of Christian faith.

It has explained for us features of the several Gospels which called for explanation, such as the fact that all three Gospels contain a considerable amount of common matter, and that two at least of them sometimes record the same words of our Lord more than once. This latter receives a sufficient explanation when it is seen that the first and third Gospels embody, in addition to matter peculiar to each Gospel, a narrative which was first drawn up by St. Mark, together with certain aphoristic sayings of Jesus, and that the 'doublets,' as they are called, are sayings which belong to both the records embodied in these Gospels. There are other facts apparent even within the common Markan matter, for which an explanation is being sought on the ground that

St. Mark prepared more than one edition of his Gospel. It is too soon yet to claim that this theory finds anything approaching general acceptance, but it would account for differences apparent in the record of the same incident as they stand in the different Gospels. There is a difference, not only in the phraseology employed, but in the incidents recorded. One Evangelist will include a parable or describe an occurrence in the life of our Lord which does not appear in the other narratives. Such passages would, if this particular theory be adopted, be at once rescued from the uncertainty now attached to them. They would rest upon the authority of St. Mark, and share the validity of all the rest of his contribution to the Gospels. But criticism has attached an even greater authority than that of St. Mark to all the matter which is Markan in origin. There is a considerable body of tradition to the effect that St. Mark wrote down that which he derived from St. Peter, and this has been verified from internal evidence, found within the narrative in question. So that the uncertainty which might be attached to these writings because St. Mark was not a follower of our Lord is at once removed, and the evidence for all this part of the Gospels is seen to be that of St. Peter. The gain in evidential value is thus very considerable. But, if the theory above-mentioned of three Markan editions be accepted, we gain further advantage in the fact that one of them—that used by St. Luke—must have been considerably earlier than the others. It would probably be as early as A.D. 42, and we should thus be in possession of a document prepared within the first decade after the death of our Lord.

The first Gospel and the third differ from the second, in the fact that they contain a considerable

amount of matter generally described as 'the sayings' of Jesus. Their appearance in these Gospels, coupled with the fact that similar sayings appear in other books of the New Testament, and that others have been recently discovered in Egypt, has led to a verification of the statement, recorded by Eusebius, that St. Matthew made a collection of our Lord's sayings, and their appearance in the first Gospel accounts for the fact that, though this Gospel contains, as we have seen, a certain amount of Markan narrative, the name of St. Matthew was early connected with the first Gospel. It is possible that this collection of sayings was even earlier in time than the Markan narrative joined to it, so that we now have a second document, which must have been in existence by the end of the first decade. There are other features of the first Gospel, such as the story of our Lord's Nativity, which were added to the two main sections, and while at present it is not possible to trace these to their source, yet it is clear that they were considered to be of equal authority with the rest of the Gospel, and were therefore incorporated with it.

The third Gospel presents several features of extraordinary interest. In addition to the Markan section and the collection of sayings used by St. Luke, we have a nativity story, a long section describing Christ's journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, in which section some of the most precious words of our Lord find their only record, and an account of the appearances of Christ after His resurrection in and about Jerusalem. It seems not unlikely that all this matter peculiar to the third Gospel may be brought under a single authorship, and there are good reasons for attributing it to one of the devout women who accom-

panied our Lord and ministered to Him of their substance. Again, it is too soon to claim finality for this view of the Gospel; but the trend of public opinion is in this direction, and, if it is one day accepted, we shall have another first-rate authority for writings whose origin at one time seemed most uncertain.

Now it is impossible to survey even thus cursorily the tendency of criticism without seeing that the historicity of the gospel record is thereby immensely strengthened, and many an attack made upon the content of the Gospel falls to the ground in consideration of these facts of criticism.

When we turn to consider the criticism of the fourth Gospel we have to acknowledge that the results, as they appear at present, do not so fully strengthen the case for the historicity of the Gospel. But we may claim that the tendency is as strongly in that direction, and at the present stage of the discussion we could scarcely expect more to be said. No better illustration of this could be desired than a comparison of the article entitled 'Gospels' contributed by Dr. E. A. Abbott to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1880, and another work entitled *The Fourfold Gospel*, published by the same author in 1913. In the former article he says:

'If the fourth Gospel is historically accurate, then (on the supposition of the identity of these two narratives)[1] the three synoptic Gospels are historically inaccurate; but if the synoptic narrative is historically accurate, the narrative of the fourth Gospel must be considered rather a new dramatic version than an independent historical account; and the same remark will necessarily apply to, and affect our estimate of, all the

[1] i.e. the Johannine and the Synoptic.

accounts of miracles in the fourth Gospel.' And again, in the same article he gives, as a summary of the whole character of the book, the conclusion that 'it is esoteric and eclectic, and designedly modifies the impression produced by the tradition previously recorded by the synoptics.' But in the later work Dr. Abbott tells us that he finds a conviction growing in his mind that 'the fourth Gospel, in spite of its poetic nature, is closer to history than I had supposed.'

Such a modification of opinion exactly indicates the course which criticism is taking, and it is clear that, if this tendency be maintained, the Church will ultimately establish that which at one time seemed likely to disappear—an historical basis for the narrative which we have in the latest Gospel; and it is almost certain that, if it does so, the process of investigation will have strengthened immeasurably the authority of the Gospel in question.

Before we discuss this process in greater detail it seems necessary first to lay down the axiom that 'history' does not mean the same thing in different ages. The modern view is, that the historian presents us with cold-drawn facts and leaves us to make our own conclusions. His own interpretation of those facts must obtrude as little as possible, and he must be in a position to guarantee his statements either from personal observation or by reference to established authority.

But in the pre-scientific age a very different conception of history was held. No one would apply the modern view of history to the writings of Thucydides. It is obvious that the whole of his writing is strongly coloured by his own point of view; that is to say, he interprets as well as narrates, and no one supposes that the speeches

he puts forward as delivered by a Pericles or a Cleon represent the *ipsissima verba* of those speakers, even though he had the advantage of writing in the language in which the speeches were given. Yet, in spite of this, we allow considerable historical value to the 'history' given to us by Thucydides. It is not difficult to deduce the substratum of fact in his writings, and his interpretation is of value as reflecting at least one side of the opinion current at the time when he wrote.

Now if we approach the fourth Gospel expecting to find in it a chronicle of facts such as we should expect in a modern biography we may at once agree to write the verdict 'unhistorical' over the whole of this book. We may go further and say that, if we expect to find the same method of treatment which we find in the synoptic writings we are making an assumption such as we never make when considering any two contemporary writings. There is no reason in the world why two writers should not deal with the same material, one putting it forward as 'the things which Jesus began both to do and to say,' and the other as an interpretation rather than a narrative. The latter will not lack value because the facts are selected as a basis of interpretation; it may even be of the greater value just because it reveals to us the conclusion drawn from the facts by those who stood near to them; so that, in comparing this writing with that of the Synoptists, we shall be concerned with only two things: one, that the writer, whoever he may prove to be, stood near enough to the facts to give us an interpretation which represents the conviction of the age, and the other that the picture drawn by him does not contradict or annul the impression made by the writings of

others equally qualified with himself. Judged by these tests, the fourth Gospel gives us material of the greatest value for enabling us to answer the question which belongs to every age, 'What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?'

Even if we waive altogether the body of patristic evidence which assigns the authorship of the fourth Gospel to the son of Zebedee, we yet hold excellent ground for believing that it was the work of one who had opportunity for verifying such facts as form the framework of his story. Critical work in the text of the New Testament and recent discoveries in connexion with the old Syriac translations have shown that the Gospel was present in the Church as an authoritative translation by the middle of the second century. Those whose imagination and knowledge help them to understand the length of time required to prepare a translation and to multiply copies of the same in the laborious way which alone was possible in the sub-apostolic age will find, in the fact that a common text was used by the African Church in Carthage and by churches as far separated as those that existed in the region of Mesopotamia, an unassailable position for believing that this Gospel was no product of Alexandrian philosophy towards the close of the second century, but that it must have been known and recognized as authoritative by the end of the first. This strong position is the result of criticism, and its value is beyond question.

With reference to the question of apostolic authorship, while every one who has given any thought at all to the subject is ready to acknowledge the difficulty of believing that the Gospel was the work of the son of Zebedee written in extreme old age and with his own hand, there yet

remains the tradition which, from the earliest age, has connected the work with the name of the apostle. Much of this is doubtless woven into the superstitious feeling common in that age; but when this is removed we may confidently lay upon those who deny such authorship the burden of proving the remaining tradition to have been false, and the critic must surely be biased in his judgement if he sets aside the statement of Irenaeus in favour of that of Georgius Hamartolus.

The Gospel may have been the work of an amanuensis writing under the guidance or at the dictation of the apostle; it may have been an expression of the accepted teaching of an Ephesian school which embodied the teaching of St. John, or it may have been written by some other 'beloved disciple' bearing the same name, but none of these theories would seriously injure the authority of the Gospel as giving us a first-century interpretation of the Person of Jesus, and thereby setting forth the significance of that Person in the realm of faith. But the fact is that there are serious arguments against every one of these alternative theories, and, in default of evidence which has not yet appeared, the apostolic authorship gives us the best explanation of the fact of the Gospel.

Turning to the contents of the Gospel itself, we recognize that both in method and in motive it differs from the other three. It is interpretation as well as narration, and with this in view the author selects facts from the life of Jesus which enable him to fulfil his purpose. Sometimes these facts are those narrated in the earlier Gospels, sometimes they appear only in the fourth, but the writer never loses sight of his great objective—to put forward those incidents which

enable the Christian to say of Jesus what Thomas said: 'My Lord and my God.' He knows that 'there are many other things which Jesus did which are not written in this book, but these,' he adds, 'are written that ye might believe, and believing may have life in His name.' This is specially noticeable in his dealing with the miracles of our Lord. He treats them as symbolic and calls them 'signs.' He selects only seven,[1] and it is not difficult to trace an ascending order of thought in those he selects, until we come at last to the raising of Lazarus, with its collateral interpretation, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.'

It is clear that a considerable amount of subjectivity must be allowed in the treatment of this Gospel. In many passages we must acknowledge that we have the mind of the Master, but the words of the disciple. Comment and interpretation are so interwoven with the discourses of Jesus that it is far from easy to say where one ends and the other begins. But, as we have already contended, this does not detract from the value of the Gospel, if we allow the conditions in which it must have been prepared. As Dr. Sanday says: 'It is a blending of fact and interpretation; but the interpretation comes from one who had a unique position, and unique advantages, for getting at the truth of that which he sought to interpret. It is the mind of Christ, seen through the medium of one of the first and closest of His companions.'

As we shall see presently, the work of the historical critic is of supreme importance for faith. It is no idle curiosity or vain delight in his own skill in dissecting ancient records, which impels him to take up the laborious task of examining

[1] This last chapter is obviously an appendix.

ancient documents, and reconstructing a history which has been overlaid with the dust of centuries. He accepts his task because his goal is that of vindicating the claim of religion upon the human heart. What the Gospels give us is religion, and the true critic is concerned with that supreme object. To him the New Testament writings will always appear of first importance, because in them he learns how religion came to be identified, in the form in which to-day it reveals both potency and promise, with Christianity. He traces, that is to say, the greatest spiritual force of which he has any knowledge back to its source, and he finds it in the life of the historical Person Jesus Christ. That Person has therefore become central within the sphere of the Christian religion, and the research of the scholar, no less than the devotion of the saint, is directly engaged with Him. It is He who has made communion with God—the great objective of the religious instinct —definite and therefore possible. He has given to it a moral content and a catholic application; and, where faith has laid hold upon Him, the believer has been seen to be endowed with an energy whose powers are all but unlimited within the sphere of spiritual life.

Revelation is not the revelation of God as absolute; it is the revelation of God in relation to man. That which has dawned upon the human consciousness is the fact of a divine Fatherhood, carrying with it that 'inheritance of God' which is the goal of man's hope. In such a revelation alone can either religion or morality find the law of its development and the fulfilling of its instincts. But if that revelation is to become authoritative for us it must be brought within the range of our consciousness. It is the Christian faith that

this has been done, and that 'God was manifest in flesh.' The revelation at once becames matter of history, and the documents which give an account of it become material to which reason and reflection must be applied. To refuse such application is to relegate Christianity to the category of folklore and mythology.

The true method of approach is to begin with the fact of faith, collective in the Church and individual in the believer. We have, as verifiable data, an institution which is distinctly defined in time, and which seems to be even now only at the beginning of its influence, and we have also an experience to which a great company of saintly men and women in every age of the present era has borne witness. Such a faith demands explanation. The 'greater works' of missionary service at home or abroad clamour for explanation. In that service we find the gradual but unceasing spread of a new interpretation of morality, a new view of society, a new conception of God, and a new spiritual hope. Adumbrations of these may have existed before in the religious ideals of men, but those ideals have now, in some measure, become actual, and they promise to heal the many divisions of mankind, making a whole race into a true family of God. Such an effect must have some adequate cause; and, as we trace the course of this stream of life back to its source, we come to the presentation of an historical Person. He is so set forth in certain historical writings that, if the facts they relate may be accepted, we need seek for no further cause; the Christ of experience will be found in the Jesus of the Gospels. The ethical content of His teaching, the sense of sin which He not only explains, but first deepens and then removes, His social gospel, His doctrine of

God, and His delineation of a kingdom of heaven as the consummation of life, are found to correspond to the present experience—while at the same time each of these is seen to possess, for the believer, the immeasurable power which is given by contact with an adequate Personality. We are ready to subscribe to His own claim. The words that He speaks to us, 'they are spirit, and they are life.'

But the Christian experience needs not only an adequate explanation, it also needs a sufficient criterion. From time to time we have to judge of the validity of our experience by laying it beside the facts which account for it. We have to 'correct the picture by the living face.' For this purpose the Christian documents which supply that criterion are of first importance, and, exposed as these have necessarily been to the uncertainties that beset everything human, the extravagances of imagination, the manifold frailties of the mind, even the perishable nature of the documents in question, our very sense of the value of the Gospel makes us the more jealous that it be purged from those accretions and disfigurements with which even piety, with 'a zeal not according to knowledge,' may have overlaid it. It is part of the providential government of God that, as our perplexities increase with the course of time, we have given to us an increasing means of removing that which impairs the record. The critic—and every intelligent reader of the Scriptures is, in some measure, a critic—deals with that record. He places its statements in relation to other facts of which he has knowledge; discovers, if he can, its geographical and temporal position, examines its author, his method and his motive; but all the time he will work with one sole end in view—what is the verifiable content of the writing, and to

what extent does that account for the fact of his experience? Until these things are known, the Gospels—as a history of events—will remain indefinite to him. That will not, it is true, make the experience any the less real. The Christian who cannot undertake such investigation will not, because of this, lose that which is life itself to him, any more than the man who cannot analyse the atmosphere will cease to breathe; but he will miss the full strength which comes to those who know how strong are the foundations upon which they build. He will retain the evidence of things not seen, but he will not know how strongly his faith is based. In fact, he will not be able to bring within reach of reason that which reason may grasp, and so faith will lose the light and strength of her great auxiliary. The full harvest of historical criticism is not yet reached, but so much has been gained that we may have confidence that, in days to come, the faith of believers will be immeasurably increased as the guiding hand and the clear purposes of God are seen in the history of the writings through which His truth comes down to us.

Within the walls of some great cathedral the light of heaven streams through the storied glass. The different parts of the picture it contains are held together by leaden frames. These have their worth; for without them that picture would not take form before us. We shall always value the frame; we shall jealously repair it wherever it may be injured; but that which casts its spell upon our spirits is not the framing, however intricate and wonderful, but the picture which it holds—an Infant in a manger, or the Man of Sorrows on His cross, or the triumphant Christ ascending on high with gifts for men.

V

THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES

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PROBABLY the most urgent need of the time in the restatement of Christian doctrine is that we should give people, in the language of to-day, adequate reasons for accepting the authority of Scripture. Past ages can hardly be said to have needed them. Five hundred years ago the man in the street took his belief obediently from infallible experts in theology: *Roma locuta est, caussa finita est.* Luther shattered that infallibility; but the human mind was not yet ready to do without a substitute, and before long it found one in the Bible. To-day, when men are told that the Bible settles some vital question of faith or practice, they are prone to ask why. How do we know that Peter and Paul were authorities beyond all others, whose words, when once we can be sure we understand and apply them rightly, are judgements of a court from which there is no appeal? It is pathetically futile to meet this question with hands uplifted in horror at the blasphemy—to declare that these writings are the Word of God, and we dare not reason about them. For surely we want to *win* these inquiring minds; and our emphatic assertion of the fact of Inspiration only provokes their natural retort that

our own infallibility is as insecure as that of the Pope himself. We must, now as ever, listen to the chief of the Twelve when he bids us be ready with our defence when any one asks us for a reasoned account of the hope that is in us.

The part of this wide subject that falls to me is the sequel to the investigations by which the adequacy of the gospel picture of Jesus is tested, by way of preparation for the supreme question, 'Who gave *Thee* authority?' I have to take the reader into the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation of John. How do these books look under the searchlights of modern scientific analysis? Have they still their old place in our regard and obedience? Can their known and unknown authors still claim from us a loyalty different in kind from that which we Methodists yield to the great name of John Wesley, or that which the world at large gives to its kings of thought, poets, philosophers, pioneers of scientific discovery? Suppose it granted that the teaching of Jesus must be recognized as possessing inherent authority, does it follow that His personal followers share it? And suppose again that Peter and John, His disciples, and James and Jude, said to be His brothers, have His authority, what are we to think of Paul, who is generally supposed not to have seen or heard Him in the flesh, or Luke, the friend and disciple of Paul, who expressly dissociates himself from the original 'eye-witnesses'? And what again of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, whose name Origen declared, nearly two centuries after the death of Paul, to be 'known by God' alone? We give these writers unique rank, and place their works in 'Holy Scripture,' which we declare to be 'inspired of God.' Wherein

does Paul's inspiration differ from that of Wesley, or John's from Robert Browning's? Suppose it proved that New Testament writers claimed inspiration, on what grounds do we allow the claim? Pretenders to inspiration have been many, in old days and modern alike. Is it the recognition of genius that passes the claim, or even thrusts it upon writers who say nothing of it? That may serve for Paul, on any showing one of the mightiest thinkers in human history. But was the author of Second Peter a greater genius than Augustine—or than Aristotle?

The questions collected in this paragraph represent, I think, with fair completeness the difficulties felt by intelligent outsiders at the moment. They are not captious or unreasonable, nor have we any right to parry, to resent, or to dogmatize upon them, as if nothing but original sin could account for their emergence in a crooked and perverse generation. They are the inevitable product of the extension and the deepening of knowledge, and the insistence of the modern spirit upon the right and the duty of science to exclude no forbidden land from the sphere of rigid and impartial inquiry. There have been voices that would urge us to meet such questions with merely ingenious answers, to denounce the spirit of honest perplexity which prompts them, to don a papal tiara and declaim an *ipse dixit* identical in terms with those the Schoolmen framed. But this is no longer possible to-day. It would only force the plain man to infer that we have no answer at all. And we have an answer, plain and straightforward and modern, free from any suspicion of special pleading or unwarranted assumption. Our own brethren, who are fearful of what may ensue if the jots and tittles of the older definitions suffer

change, may be reminded, firstly, that the new answers are not meant for those who can believe in the New Testament in the old way, but for children of the age who cannot honestly thus believe; and secondly, that these new answers establish in a sound relation to modern knowledge every claim that the New Testament makes for itself. If anything of the Church's tradition has to go, it is soon found that this was an accretion of a later and less enlightened day.

Our first step will naturally be to take a brief survey of the Books with which we are concerned, gathering into a few sentences the critical position reached by an open-minded and thoroughly modern student as he balances the arguments of radical and conservative critics of to-day. A word on historical criticism may come first. It is not of much use to argue the date and authorship of books which are confidently set down to purely mythical names. We have passed through a brief period of encyclopaedic denial, which made the Twelve into signs of the zodiac, closely connected with an abstraction which may have been a Sun of Righteousness, but never was 'Jesus Christ coming in flesh.' The mythical theory has been dissolved, not by the logic, learning, or eloquence of Christian scholarship, but by the more obviously impartial laughter of outsiders. In my Fernley Lecture (1913, p. 27 f.) I quoted Dr. F. C. Conybeare's crushing paragraph in *The Literary Guide and Rationalist Review*. A weightier witness still, less hostile, but sufficiently independent, can now be called. In a note introducing the reprint of his famous speculation concerning the circumstances of the Crucifixion,[1] Dr. J. G. Frazer pronounces

[1] *The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed., 1913; Pt. VI: *The Scapegoat*, p. 412. The whole note should be studied.

'the doubts which have been cast on the historical reality of Jesus' to be 'unworthy of serious attention. Quite apart from the positive evidence of history and tradition, the origin of a great religious and moral reform is inexplicable without the personal existence of a great reformer.' The sound scientific principle thus laid down will naturally hold for Paul, whom a prominent school has made into the second founder of Christianity. Here, to be sure, the mythical enthusiasts have been less courageous; though indeed Paul might as well be a myth, for any practical purpose, if all his Epistles are to be transferred to some anonymous genius of the second century. But this need no longer trouble us. Nothing can be more certain than that if the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* should ever be brought up to date—a process which after a dozen years it urgently needs in some parts—van Manen's unhappy articles will be the first to be replaced, and the unanimity of modern scholarship will find expression in the recognition of nearly everything that has been attributed to Paul. The days are past when a scholar with a reputation to lose could afford to question 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, Colossians, or Philemon—not to speak of Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians. Difficulties as to 2 Thessalonians are being solved, and even the long-questioned Pastorals are accepted in some unlikely quarters to-day. As to Ephesians, the difficulties are not slight, but they can (I venture to believe) be surmounted if we imagine Paul giving a colleague of his the task of drafting a circular letter to the Churches of Asia, after a long talk in which he told him what he wanted said: Paul would then proceed to dictate a special letter to Colossae, and when the other letter was finished he revised the draft and made it even more thoroughly his own.

A few words will suffice for summing up the present position of the other books, as criticism will most probably leave them. There is the Acts, more and more firmly established as the work of Luke the Physician by Harnack's critical investigation, and by progressive research cleared of those charges of inaccuracy which once used to give apologists no little trouble. There is 1 Peter, to the Petrine authorship of which there is really no valid objection; and 2 Peter, now almost everywhere allowed to belong to a large class of literature characteristic of the age, in which the name and character of a famous man of the past is assumed in perfect good faith for the inculcating of important truth. There are the Epistles of John, certainly by the author of the fourth Gospel, and the Revelation, probably by another John, as was believed at an early period in the Church's history. On James and Jude I must not tarry: the former, at any rate, I personally believe to be one of the earliest of New Testament writings, and the work of a son of Joseph and Mary, who from his own commanding character, and the special honour paid to a 'brother of the Lord,' had a natural pre-eminence in the Church at Jerusalem. There remains Hebrews, one of the profoundest and most inspiring of them all; yet when we ask the author's name, the Epistle itself replies only 'I am a Voice.' It must at any rate come from the very centre of the Pauline circle, and date before Jerusalem fell. The books accordingly go back to the second half of the first century, a few falling within the fifties, one or two in the late nineties, and 2 Peter probably crossing the boundary of the century.

Why were these books selected for their commanding position? They are not the only extant

first-century Christian literature, and we naturally ask why Clement of Rome and the *Teaching of the Twelve* were rejected, with many other writings which have vanished altogether, or survive in scanty fragments. Perhaps for the two former the best answer would be '*Tolle, lege!*' No one who read these pious works could ever wonder why they fell out of competition for a place among the classics of Christianity. But the struggle was admittedly severe and long-continued in the case of some books which we possess. One of our two oldest Greek Bibles includes the *Shepherd* of Hermas and the Epistle credited to Barnabas; so that more than two hundred years after the latest canonical book was written there were still important circles in which other works could be classed as Scripture. Indeed at that time the controversy was hardly closed as to the reception of some books whose place in our New Testament has been assured for ages. Who settled this vital question, and on what principles? If (which is not the case) some Oecumenical Council of 'undivided' Christendom determined the Canon by a decisive vote, we should still have to ask on what grounds we of the twentieth century must bow to the decisions of the fourth. There is little enough in our records of the time to compel us to believe that the age following Constantine understood Jesus any better than we do, or anything like as well.

To develop our modern answer to these problems we had better go back to the beginning and sketch a consecutive history from our external evidence and from general probabilities. We know from an undisputed document that a quarter of a century after the Crucifixion there were still living most of the five hundred disciples of Jesus who had seen Him on one memorable occasion after

His death. Our oldest Gospel gives us an unmistakable picture of multitudes listening to His teaching through a large proportion of the brief ministry. Among the thousands who flocked into the Church in its earliest years, the great majority must have seen and heard the great Teacher many times. And in the midst of the large company of 'disciples,' all of them obviously familiar with His personality and teaching, were the Twelve who were with Him continually, selected to be the objects of His training, that they might witness of Him when He was no more seen by human eyes. They were plain, homely men of the middle or lower middle class. Nearly all of them have been overtaken by oblivion, as far as their separate individuality is concerned. In the Synoptic Gospels there are only five of them of whom we know anything more than the bare list tells us, and most of that is little enough. Even when we add the brief reminiscences of the fourth Gospel, which touch three or four more, we have nothing recorded that would point to any outstanding characters among them except Peter and Judas. Peter himself was a remarkable personality, but not a man of genius: we must bring in the evidence connecting the fourth Gospel with the son of Zebedee before we can recognize genius within the circle of the Twelve.

The fact is that the Twelve were not wanted for any purpose which only genius could fulfil. Clear heads, retentive memories, warm hearts and devoted earnestness were their qualifications. They had to tell what they had seen and heard, not to frame a theory to account for it all. The principle which underlies the British jury system is not an inapt illustration. We do not impanel a jury of poets or painters or professors to give a

verdict on a complex criminal trial. It is the very essence of the system that the jury must be typically average: we need the judgement of the plain man who has been carefully instructed in the points of law concerned, has seen and heard the witnesses, and followed the arguments of counsel on both sides, and the summing up of the judge. To have as many as three very clever men on one jury would generally mean their dismissal on failing to agree! The Twelve included one man of acute mind, united with his comrades at first by the common enthusiasm for their Master's person, and the common ambition to play a part in the redemption of Israel. His gifts of brain were probably greater than theirs, but his heart was not capable of such simple loyalty. When his penetration realized that the promised Kingdom was 'not of this world,' the shock of the discovery revealed his ambition to be greater than his devotion. With the Eleven, to love Him was their liberal education: they believed in that temporal Kingdom till the Ascension, but any evil effects of their belief were neutralized by the expulsive power of a mightier affection. So Judas fell, and went to his own place, while his comrades were content with the humble, blessed place that was theirs—the place of faithful reporters of words unmatched in history and deeds that have transformed the world.

Into the midst of this company of simple and devoted believers there came before long a man of genius and learning. He had been trained under the greatest of the Rabbis, and his fiery fanaticism against the new heresy arose from a wholehearted acceptance of the fundamental postulate of religious conservatism, that God's last word to man was spoken long ago. In the midst of his persecuting activity Saul saw in the sky, in a blinding blaze

of glory, a Face that he knew.[1] He had seen it during that last week in Jerusalem, and perhaps earlier, when the fanatical Rabbinist had joined inquisitorial deputations which tracked the Galilean Prophet down to distant parts in order to ensnare Him with cunning questions. He had been with the party that arrested Him, and heard —what only his pupil Luke recorded—the last words in which Jesus recognized 'the authority of darkness' as compassing His death, and the deliverance of believers in Him.[2] He had even forced himself—so it would seem—to go to the Place of a Skull, and by the very horror of such a sight feel that he was rendering service unto God. And then the vision showed him that, in spite of the law, Jesus was *not* 'accursed of God.' Saul fled into solitude, where Moses and Elijah had heard God's voice, and he came back with the problem solved. The authoritative saying of the law still stood for him. But Christ had 'redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.'

How to deal with twentieth-century views of this doctrine is not our present question. The point now is that what we may call Paulinism was accepted in all its broad lines by the multitude of those who had often heard Jesus, and by the Twelve and others who had been His intimate disciples. They were very far from prejudiced in Paul's favour, and we know how many of them rebelled against his teaching as to the supersession of the ceremonial law. But his interpretation of the mystery of the Cross must have satisfied them all. It could only do so by explaining to

[1] My reasons for taking this view, one familiar to the lovers of F. W. H. Myers's *Saint Paul*, are set forth in a paper in the *Expositor* for July 1911.

[2] Luke xxii. 53; Col. i. 13.

them hard sayings they remembered from His lips, and fitting in with indications He had given which—as so often happened—they could not even dimly understand till He had died and risen.

The foregoing argument will perhaps move the scorn of advanced thinkers with whom it is an axiom that Paul was a great innovator whose superstructure has to be cleared away before we can find out anything reliable about Jesus. We are often told that we have no guidance in the quest of the historical Jesus, except modern scientific guess-work: so completely has the masterful Apostle put his own theological system between us and the simplicity of the Galilean! Browning's Cleon writes of

> one called Paulus; we have heard his fame,
> Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
> I know not, nor am troubled much to know.

We are apparently to relapse into the same ignorance, from a too microscopic study of Paulinism, which we show our acuteness by discovering in places where it is not. Now that Paul's theology was not unanimously and unquestionably accepted as a whole by his fellow-Christians is obvious to any intelligent reader. It is certain that Paul and Peter differed considerably in their outlook, though later generations have rightly rejected the effort of the Tübingen school to elevate that difference into a primary element in first-century history. Diversity has been the sign of life in every age of the Church; and we should make an immense blunder if we were to discredit 'our unhappy divisions' by contrasting them with the blessed unity of faith and thought which characterized the Apostolic Age. Men differed then as they differ now, but the differences were counteracted by a stronger

centripetal force than we see in Christendom to-day—that is all. We know what the subjects were on which Gentile and Jewish Christians differed. It is enough to say of them here that they did not touch the central gospel of Jesus as Divine Lord and Redeemer. On this there was no discord between the men who cried 'I am of Paul' and those who, with varying degrees of asperity, replied 'I am of Cephas.' This appears very emphatically from the casual and incidental character of New Testament Christology. We have no doctrinal treatises which set out to defend the Deity of Jesus. The great doctrine is assumed at every point, as one which the whole community accepts; and the only heresy that needs to be kept at bay is that which denies 'Jesus Christ coming in flesh.' Unitarianism never has been a really serious peril to the Church. Docetism was a peril in the first century, and it is a peril now, infecting the most unimpeachable orthodoxy, as it did in those early days. Against it even the fourth Gospel, most conspicuous of all in its setting forth of a Divine Christ, contends with vehement earnestness that He took upon Him a humanity as real as our own, but without stain or flaw. Writers widely divergent in style and in thought agree on this picture of the Divine Man. Peter takes up an Old Testament passage which vehemently proclaims Jehovah of Hosts the One unapproachable Being who claims the whole of man's worship, and in quoting he quietly substitutes the name of Christ [1]—not aggressively, as if flinging out an argument, but almost as if he was unconscious of having varied the language.

And this is only one example among many. The Church set out to convince the world that the

[1] 1 Peter iii. 15; Isa. viii. 12, 13.

Man of Nazareth was really the Christ, the Son of God, that by believing they might have life in His Name. They were not troubled with the work of uplifting imperfect faith in their own host. There were unbalanced minds which could not believe He stooped so low as to feel human hunger and weariness, to sleep and eat like other men, and at the last, His body worn out by the long strain of service, to die under torture in a tithe of the time needed to kill other victims of the same accursed cruelty. And—a far more natural and still-surviving instinct of reverent minds—many believers failed to realize that His humanity could only be truly one with that of His brethren when He had laid aside His divine knowledge, to fill His human mind by the exercise of perfect human faculties in unobstructed contact with the Spirit of God. In this way He had, like other children, learned the Father's Name at His mother's knee, grown in wisdom with the years, and in the fullness of manhood had needed information from eye and ear, shared the knowledge of His time on matters not concerning spiritual truth, and declared His own ignorance of the 'day and the hour' of His final triumph. Doubts of this real humanity could not affect the eye-witnesses. They proclaimed everywhere what their eyes had seen and their hands handled of the Incarnate Word, and their fundamental testimony secured to the Church of after-days the message without which the triumph would never have been won. For the great warfare which, after three centuries, enthroned 'another Emperor, Jesus,' [1] above the Augustus of Rome was one between two embodiments of a central instinct of humanity —that we can never know God save as He is

[1] Acts xvii. 7.

revealed in human flesh. Zeus and the Olympians had long lost their hold on Greek thought, just because they were so human as to reflect mostly human weakness. Jupiter and the gods of Rome were never more than cold and distant abstractions. The worship of the majesty of Empire, incarnate in the Imperial purple, brought Deity near to men, and at its best carried with it the great thought that God is good.[1] But when the successors of Augustus, all through the first century, stained their divinity with crimes far darker than inherited folklore had ever attached to Zeus, the world was ready to see that its god was below and not above humanity, that the watchword 'Caesar is God' spelt the Number of the Beast.[2] The appointed Victor over this bastard religion of humanity must be One as human as Caesar, but showing undimmed and unstained the very image of the Eternal Father. He must meet Force by a power mightier and diviner far; and when a hideous and degrading death had destroyed the human body He stooped to wear, men would turn from the image of *Tiberius Divi Filius* to His Cross, and say, 'Truly *this* man was Son of God.'

Such, then, was the Faith that won the world. It was the outcome of human experience working upon historic facts, and the facts were as human as the experience. In what other way could God reveal Himself to man? If the Book of God had been what so many of its lovers still declare it to be, it would have failed to grip humanity as completely as a speech in Russian would fail in

[1] See *Religions and Religion* (Fernley Lecture, 1913), p. 82 *f.*

[2] The Greek letters of the two words, read as numerals, sum up to the mystic number of Rev. xiii. 18 (R.V. *mg.*); see Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, p. 277.

an English assembly. Many years ago, in the University pulpit at Oxford, the confident voice of a prince of dogmatism thundered out a thesis that no longer finds expression so logical:

'Every Book of [the Bible], every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it (where are we to stop?), every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High, faultless, unerring, supreme.'

Did the man in the pew murmur to himself 'How may I know this?' The answer was sufficient—Dean Burgon said so, and he voiced the infallible certainty of the Church. To-day men find the answer unconvincing. Has then the Foundation of the Apostles at last begun to slip? The Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral are asking for a vast sum of money to save the precious fabric committed to their care, and it will largely be spent deep down where no eye can see. Is that a parable of a more venerable fabric that once stood strong, and still retains its beauty and majesty unimpaired, while men who know speak darkly of foundations that can bear no longer the mass that is built upon them? Theorists and men of the world will doubtless accept the omen. Not so they who tread to-day in the footsteps of the Apostles, and bring the Faith in fearless and modern vividness to heal the broken heart or create anew the life that is wrecked with sin. It is common for timid believers to portray the modern pulpit as befogged with doubts—the modern Greatheart paralysed by the grip of something called Criticism as he tries to wield the sword of the Spirit. Possibly. The man who has only half learned his lesson, who trained his

intellect to a certain point, but forgot that without the heart none can become a theologian, who took over from the Middle Ages a doctrine of the Bible owing nothing to the fresh vigour of the first century, and found that modern knowledge robbed him of his faith—such a man may sometimes get into the pulpit, and then of course the hungry sheep look up and are not fed. But the remedy does not lie in throwing away the scholarly output of the century, and presenting to the pew a pitiful helplessness in the face of the knowledge of the day. The true Christian Modernist knows better, and is little moved by the violence of well-meaning men who cannot understand him. He started in his own soul by *knowing* Him whom he believed. And then he was assured that Truth could never be the enemy of Faith, that if modern science and history and criticism affected the Bible at all it could only be human theories about it, the real power of the Book lying where no human hand can reach it to spoil or destroy. He does not enter the pulpit to set up and answer objections, to proclaim half-understood novelties, to destroy the cherished mistakes of humble piety. He is there to preach a Great Certainty, far more certain to his own mind than it was before he dared to face facts and welcome all that human knowledge could bring him, without fearing lest honest and uncompromising search after Truth for Truth's sake should lead him into a desert of despair. He has left Criticism behind in his study, where it helped him to get a firmer intellectual grasp of the interpretation of the Faith. He has no outworn theories to defend, no dull philosophy to expound. He is there to be the very voice of the undying Christ, pleading to men and women and little children of the twentieth century that

they may take into their inmost heart the redeeming Fact which will yet turn the world upside down.

There is one other question that must be discussed if the subject of this brief essay is to be adequately treated even up to its limited scale. We have seen that when mere *a priori* theories about Divine Revelation have been put aside, the Revelation came, in actual fact, through human channels. If the modern believer wants to show that the finger of God was there, he does not seek for evidence of abnormal events, unexplained marvels which might be taken as conclusive proofs of the divine working. He does not capitulate to a hasty impatience, and jettison 'miracles' as impossible: he prefers to 'wait and see.' But meanwhile the study of history is bringing him daily new wealth of wonders yet more wonderful. He learns to recognize, in the rise of Christianity and its work in the world through nearly nineteen centuries, the signs of a Mind and a Heart greater than man's. We understand to-day far better than our fathers how complete and many-sided was the preparation for the first preaching of the gospel. Hebrew religion, Roman government, Greek language and thought—each brought the flower of human achievement in its own chosen field to equip the missionaries of the new Faith, as they went forth to a world that was ready as never before. If all this was chance, then truly Chance is a mighty God, and it is time we built temples once more to a divinity unduly neglected since the Hellenistic age. Equally impressive is the evidence we gather from our own time. How futile it is to stake our whole case upon claims that the Gospels never made, when we can hear those Gospels speaking in over six hundred

languages, and see them everywhere transforming men's lives! It will be time enough to discuss the inspiration of other books when they have secured one reader for every hundred to whom the New Testament appeals, or achieved the millionth part of the same results in humanizing and elevating men.

Since we have thus assured ourselves that the New Testament belongs to its own age, that the Apostles and their comrades addressed their immediate audience without the slightest thought of posterity—for which indeed there was no room if the new heavens and new earth were as near as they imagined—we necessarily ask whether these books can possibly be free from elements peculiar to the time. Is it not inevitable that they should sometimes deal in issues which have long ago ceased to be living, and employ arguments forcible in the world of the first century, but no longer cogent in a society actuated by widely different principles and basing its thought on conditions undreamed of in the Apostles' day? To take one very important example, how can we subscribe now to the kind of inferences often drawn in the New Testament from the Old? It was natural enough for Paul to convince Jews from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ, for he and they started from the same canons of interpretation, which it is sometimes hard for the modern man even to understand. How much of the Christian Scriptures must we give up as invalidated for us by the change in our standpoint and the growth of knowledge?

The general answer is, I take it, that it is all a matter of *translation*. Not the translation which takes the words and sentences of a foreign author and expresses their meaning through equivalents

in another tongue, but the larger and more difficult process which takes the gold of a great thinker's ideas and mints it afresh for currency in another age. Let us take a concrete example. Paul founds a momentous argument on the story of the Fall in Genesis. For him, of course, Adam and Eve were absolutely historical, and their biography as reliable as anything his friend Luke might be writing at the time. But what would happen to Paul's argument if the first eleven chapters of Genesis were to be regarded as allegory rather than fact, inherited sagas on which the religious genius of Israel's prophets indelibly stamped the great foundation truths of the national faith? (It does not fall within my limits to inquire whether this view of Genesis is true: I assume it only for the sake of the argument.) What would happen? Why, only that we should recognize again the amazing insight with which Paul's instinct fastened on the permanent religious factors of an Old Testament story. At worst we should only have to rewrite Paul's thesis in an adapted form. Adam might become typical primitive man—which, by the way, would in Hebrew not even involve changing his name. The Fall might be referred to as the period in the evolution of mankind when men first felt the dawning sense of right and wrong differentiating them from the animal kingdom, through which in his physical and mental constitution man had slowly and wonderfully ascended. But these changes—supposing that they have to be counted necessary—would make no difference whatever in the essentials of Paul's teaching. A Paulinist to-day, setting out the old teaching in terms of our current anthropology and biology, can preserve the whole of Paul's thought and only alter the form:

Speaking more generally, the appeal to the Old Testament takes for us a very different shape from that which it assumed in the early days of Christianity. For us the New Testament is incomparably more cogent even than the Old, however little we are prepared to abandon appeals to the divinely guided history of Israel and the preparation for the gospel involved therein. Paul himself speaks to us with more authority than prophet or psalmist, in that he stood in the daylight of Christ's presence, and they only greeted it from afar before the dawn. To his contemporaries Paul must support the gospel by appealing to the law. Men of our time might think his appeal sometimes imperfect, involving a strained or faulty interpretation of a document which could hardly bear the weight he laid on it. But Paul's conclusions are sounder than the strongest arguments by which he could commend them to men of his own day. Nevertheless, it remains profoundly important to study his presuppositions and his logic, as well as the original material he presses into such high service. For such study will enable us to comprehend Paul's own mind, and the comprehending of such a mind will help to bring us near to the mind of the Master Himself.

From our whole survey we may realize more vividly than ever that the Apostles were like the builder who dug and went deep and laid his foundation upon the Rock. Their authority for us to-day is centred wholly in the faithfulness and insight with which they depict and interpret Jesus. The inquiry of this essay accordingly brings us to the focus on which all the other essays converge: What is *His* authority? All Scripture and all experience help us to our answer. It is not like any authority known on earth. Omnipotence

wields no thunderbolt when the voice from heaven says, 'Hear ye Him!' No service but that of perfect freedom is worthy of us, or worthy of our Master. We hear Him not because Church or Book proclaims Him infallible. We believe Him not because to reject Him would be an intellectual aberration, like rejecting a proposition of Euclid. Deep in the heart He made there lies a harmony that responds to His voice alone. Responsible before God to no judge but One, invested with the dread prerogative of free choice which can never be delegated, we hear Jesus speak; and even when we rebel, the man within us knows that He speaks true. He made us for Himself, and our heart must ever be restless until it rest in Him.

VI

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

J. Scott Lidgett, M.A., D.D.

If in these days any one were asked to name the most characteristic doctrine of the Christian faith it is most probable that he would at once reply, without any hesitation, 'The Fatherhood of God.' The readiness and assurance with which this answer would be given depend upon various influences. To begin with, upon the general impression made by the New Testament and especially by some of the outstanding teachings of our Lord. No one can read the Gospels without perceiving at a glance that the standard of Divine perfection revealed in them is that of ideal Fatherhood. The distinctive type of faith made manifest in the spirit and teaching of Christ is that it treats this ideal Fatherhood not as conjecture, but as the supreme and underlying reality of the universe. Faith consists in such whole-hearted and steadfast reliance upon this Fatherhood as makes it in all its holiness and generosity the relationship that moulds man's spiritual response, lays down the governing principles of his conduct, and becomes the ground of his confident expectations for himself and for the world at large.

Yet the mere letter of the Scriptures, taken by itself, is not sufficient to account for the almost instinctive readiness with which the inquiry would

be answered. The modern mind is to some extent prepared to find the primacy of the Fatherhood of God in the New Testament Scriptures by the presuppositions with which it approaches them. These presuppositions owe their existence to three proximate causes. First of all, to the powerful and lasting influence of cradle piety, the mother-religion of which Luther spoke. The 'Our Father' of the Lord's Prayer is the earliest, the most important, and the oftest repeated, formula of faith embodied in worship. The spirit of the child is more or less fashioned by it from the beginning, according to the thoroughness of its Christian training. In after-years he enters into an inheritance and social environment, the whole effect of which is to build up the spirit of self-reliance upon the sure foundation that the universe itself is reliable—that it means well to those who take advantage of it. All along the line, faith is called in to cast out fear, knowledge of what is counted upon to create what should be. This is nothing else than a great and continuous venture upon the beneficence of the universe, and therefore upon a certain Fatherliness in its inmost constitution and prevailing laws. All this is still further strengthened by the growth during recent generations of the humaner spirit which founds itself upon the conception and sentiment of human brotherhood. The stronger this becomes the more powerful is its reaction upon the governing theological postulates which, clearly or only dimly perceived, lie behind it. These wider influences do, indeed, owe something to racial temperament and to Western environment. Yet these last have supplied only the raw material which has been taken up and fashioned by directly Christian influences throughout the ages. Hence

both the letter of the New Testament and the temper with which it is approached, under the conditions of a more or less Christian civilization, conspire to make the Fatherhood of God the central truth of the Christian religion, the means by which it reaches out to a world-embracing catholicity, and the principle by which it seeks to transform, and, where needed, to reconstruct all human relationships.

Yet herein lies a paradox. A belief in the Fatherhood of God, taking the words in their most general sense, is by no means confined to Christianity. The Aryan races have in a sense been beforehand with the Dyaus-pitar of their prime, subsequently known among the Greeks as Zeus, the Father of Gods and men, and among the Romans as Father Jupiter. Our own Scandinavian ancestors recognized Odin, the All-Father. Whatever be the shortcomings of this conception, it certainly is conspicuous for simplicity and freedom from all ambiguity. The very fact that it arose out of and is contained within the sphere of nature-religions gives it an easy universality which accommodates it to the genial moods of the natural man. Its interpretation is far easier than that of the New Testament doctrine. Indeed the facile representation of the latter given by the ordinary man is often more in accord with Indo-European Paganism than with Christian revelation.

In the New Testament, to say nothing of the Old, the Fatherhood of God has to assimilate aspects of the character of God, and of His relationship to the universe, which are fatal to any merely genial conception of His Fatherhood, and have often been held to restrict both its supremacy and its universality. These sterner

elements of scriptural teaching have also received a wide-spread response from the spiritual consciousness of mankind. So much has this been the case that for the space of a thousand years, from St. Augustine to Luther, the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God fell entirely into the background. Both the authoritative and the current faith and practice of the Christian Church were almost hopelessly at variance with it. Even the Reformation only partially restored it to its place. Even now, and even within the Churches of the Reformation, there are to be found great multitudes who would not admit the supremacy of the Fatherhood of God in any such sense as to make it the one and only relationship which explains His universal dealings with mankind. It has come by its own perhaps in the experience of the elect few. Yet the very fact that their experience makes them elect and is so unspeakably precious is treated as restricting the range of the Fatherhood of God, and not merely the fullness of its expression. So far as the more general aspects of religion are concerned, the sovereignty of God, treated often in a way that is incompatible with His Fatherhood, is deemed the key to His dealings with the world. This conception of sovereignty is built upon a particular interpretation of the Old Testament doctrine of sovereignty as being more original and more universal in scope than the New Testament doctrine of Fatherhood. Then the Old Testament doctrine, thus understood, is used to give emphasis to certain aspects of the New Testament doctrine of God which are held to negate the universality of His Fatherhood. Hence when we speak of the Fatherhood of God as the supreme and most distinctive doctrine of Christian theology

we are faced with the threefold difficulty that the Fatherhood of God has been accepted with greater simplicity elsewhere, that it passed to a large extent out of the consciousness of Christendom throughout a great period of history, and that it is set forth in such a way even in the New Testament as to lead many good Christians to treat it rather as a privilege specially reserved to an elect section of mankind than as a universal reality upon which all men may confidently count for all the purposes and needs of life.

All this goes to show that, if the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God be distinctive of Christianity, its content is also distinctive. That is to say, it is marked by such unique features as differentiate it altogether from the doctrine presented elsewhere. Its simplicity is combined with a singular complexity. The elements which create this complexity need the most careful study —if the claim that is made in regard to the place of the Fatherhood of God in Christian theology is to be established. It must be shown not merely that these elements are compatible with Fatherhood, but that they so enhance its glory that the doctrine is comparatively valueless without them, and that the experience of its fullness is impossible unless these elements have complete justice done to them both in faith and thought. It must be shown that it is from an altogether higher standpoint that the doctrine of Christian revelation reaches out towards the more genial assumptions to be found both in other religions and in the half-Christian opinions of ordinary men. The very conception of Fatherhood as applied to God must be transformed by that which Christian revelation and experience supply. Only as the doctrine is thus exalted,

transformed, and made comprehensive in Christ can it hold its own in the face of all the aspects and interests of the spiritual life which challenge it. On the transcendent plane of the New Testament alone can the Fatherhood of God be held to be the first and last word, not merely of Christian religion, but of all religion that has permanent and completely satisfying value. If all this can be shown, then and only then does the revelation of Christ contained in the New Testament stand out with the unchallengeable superiority which marks the highest and final Word of God.

The most striking peculiarity of the New Testament doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is the way in which it is bound up with the personal consciousness of sonship. It is therefore not vague and expansive, but, so to speak, concentrated in the highest spiritual and moral values. Its wider implications and its remoter consequences are revealed in a deep personal experience of its reality and unsearchable riches. In the first place, the Fatherhood stands revealed in the Son. The words added later on, probably, to the original opening of St. Mark's Gospel, 'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*,' represent the general sense of the Synoptic Gospels. The great saying in St. Matthew's Gospel, 'All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father; and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him' (Matt. xi. 27), while Johannine in its cast, can easily be shown to be in complete harmony with the general sense of our Lord's discourses as reported in the other Gospels. Obviously the fourth Gospel accentuates this peculiarity: 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only

begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him' (John i. 18). The testimony of St. Paul's Epistles is to the same effect. It is as 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' that the Fatherhood of God is made known (Eph. i. 3; see also 2 Cor. i. 3, and Col. i. 3). The opening of 1 Peter is to the same effect (1 Pet. i. 3). The same teaching pervades the Epistles of St. John: 'Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him' (1 John iv. 9). The Epistle to the Hebrews completes this consensus by the declaration that 'God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son' (Heb. i. 1, 2).

The knowledge of the Father thus original in the case of the Son is extended to others only through the far-reaching spiritual transformation which conveys to them both the status of sonship and the power to enjoy it. St. Paul emphasizes this change of status by his characteristic use of the term 'adoption.' He tells the Romans, 'Ye received, not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father' (Rom. viii. 15). It is significant that the Epistle to the Ephesians, which is in many respects the most expansive of St. Paul's writings, maintains the rigidity of the Apostle's teaching in this respect by basing everything upon the fact that God has 'fore-ordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself' (Eph. i. 5). St. John, while assuming the change of status in such sayings as that of 1 John iii. 1, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should *be called* the children of God,' dwells rather upon the regen-

eration by which power is given to realize this calling and to enter into this inheritance. 'As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (John i. 12, 13). Yet both St. Paul and St. John, while emphasizing the newness of this filial relationship which is in sharpest contrast to what has gone before it, treat the entrance upon sonship as the fulfilment of an antecedent potentiality, so that entrance into the new relationship is indeed the perfecting of manhood in its Godward relations. The main point, however, that we have to note for the moment is that the Fatherhood of God, as understood in the New Testament, is only realized in and through the personal experience of sonship, and that in every case save that of Christ this experience is treated as only brought about by the most far-reaching spiritual transformation.

This relationship of sonship, original in Christ, and specially conferred upon others by an act of grace and mercy in Christ, determines in every way the personal life of those who enjoy it. It establishes a fellowship with God, in which the inexhaustible meaning and power of His love are progressively revealed. It supplies the formative energy by which the whole of life is henceforth fashioned and empowered, the vital principles by which character and conduct are shaped, the confident expectations which are based, not merely upon a bare word of promise, however divinely guaranteed, but also upon the immanent apprehension and anticipation of faith that rises up to claim the eternal inheritance held out to it in Christ.

It is only through this vital and pervasive experience of sonship in and through Christ that the Fatherhood of God, according to the New Testament, stands revealed. All other conceptions of it, if not misleading, fall utterly short of its essential content and its highest significance. In other words, the all-perfect Fatherhood can only be manifested in all the wealth of its content, purpose, and resources, when an adequate sonship corresponds to it. This condition is certainly absent for the present in ordinary men. It is only partially present even in those who have undergone the spiritual experience described by St. Paul and St. John. The Fatherhood of God, according to the consentient voices of the New Testament writers, was only fully displayed in the Son of God, and in His case not merely in the filial consciousness which was the all-controlling factor of His earthly life, but in the completed life-history which started from His Incarnation, was continued in His Death and Resurrection, and culminated in His exaltation to the right hand of the Father. Only in this transcendent life-history, according to the New Testament, is the full significance of the Fatherhood of God displayed. And the essential meaning of our Lord's Christhood lies just in this, that it is from what appears at first sight to be most distinctive of the Fatherhood of God towards His only begotten Son, and from this alone, that we can learn what His Fatherhood means in purpose, promise, and potentiality for all mankind in Christ.

All this is to say that the Fatherhood of God in the New Testament is neither an abstract doctrine, nor the ultimate conclusion of an argument, nor a poetic fancy. It is matter of immediate

experience. It becomes the starting-point of all life and thought. It rests upon a spiritual reality that lies at the foundation of all things for those who enjoy it. It is woven into a concrete texture of which Christ is all in all: Christ in His completely filial consciousness, in His supernatural life-history, and in His atoning and redemptive relationship to His people. If space permitted, it would be possible to illustrate this by detailed examination of every type of teaching contained in the New Testament. The Fatherhood of God is so pervasively immanent in Christ and in the redemption wrought out by Him that it can only be realized in Him. When, however, it is thus realized, it is seen to be the sovereign relationship out of which the creation, redemption, and consummation of the universe proceed. Out of this context the doctrine as such is deduced and in it the doctrine is defined. It is only as thus conditioned that the Fatherhood of God becomes the first and last word of all truly Christian theology.

The result of all this is, that the New Testament doctrine of the Fatherhood of God reverses in a most important sense what may be called the doctrine of the natural man on the subject. The Fatherhood of God, as understood in the ancient Aryan religions, stands simply for His natural creatorship conceived as paternity. It need not, and, indeed, did not include all that is usually meant by creatorship. At this level the analogy of Fatherhood may be so pressed as to debase the conception of creatorship, and to make it all the more difficult either to invest the character of God with truly ethical attributes or to introduce ethical elements into the nature of His relationship to man. The utmost that can be done on

these lines is to emphasize benignity as a distinguishing mark of the divine character and as contributing a kindly motive and temper to the divine creatorship or sovereignty. This serious limitation hampered Greek religion from beginning to end. Although the influences of moral development entered here and there, they were never able so to transform the theology as to purge it of the elements of nature-religion out of which it arose. Even philosophy, on the whole, found it easier to rationalize the theology into Pantheism than effectively to moralize it. Even Plato is forced to leave his Idea of the Good in an indeterminate and variable relationship to God, and therefore to the world. If he is able to identify the Idea of Good with the Idea of Being, that is of supreme Reality, both of them stand in uncertain or external relations to God, and therefore fail to assert in any adequate degree their supremacy in the realm of created existence and unfolding history. To this day the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, as found in what is known as natural theology, or religion, partakes of these limitations and is more or less unfriendly to the higher aspirations of religion and the more exacting standards of morality. It easily assimilates certain humane and even sentimental elements in religion, but often at the cost both of the nobler and of the more virile. It adjusts itself most easily to a view of the material universe which dwells exclusively upon its beneficent aspects, and to an estimate of human nature that is too sanguine to entertain its more sombre features.

Now the New Testament doctrine is just the reverse of all this. It finds its centre and source in the transcendent perfection, the ineffable holiness of God. Only those who come to know

Him on the plane of this august holiness can be said to have real experience of His Fatherhood or to be entitled to lay claim to sonship in any adequate sense of the term. In the holy Fatherhood, thus revealed and apprehended, however, its universal and more natural elements are contained. The holiness of 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' stands for His infinite and perfect love. This love, which is so amazingly manifest in Christ and towards those who through Him receive the adoption of sons, is the key to the meaning of God's universal sovereignty. The holy Father must needs be the Creator, and His creatorship is exercised in and through 'the Son of His Love,' in whom 'were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible or things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist' (Col. i. 16, 17). That is at least to say, with Dante, that 'the Love' which is made manifest in Christ 'moves the sun and moon and all the other stars.' The Fatherhood of God in Christ presupposes His creative sovereignty. This creative sovereignty is so motived by holy and universal love that it has its predestined consummation in redemption and in the glorious display of Fatherhood therein revealed. Thus 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' is 'the Father of glory' (Eph. i. 17).

It is clear, therefore, that the New Testament doctrine of the Fatherhood of God appropriates and transforms the Old Testament doctrine of His sovereignty in its final and most perfect form. It does this so completely that the Old Testament lives for ever as a permanent and vital constituent

of the New. The supreme glory of the Old Testament and its abiding spiritual value are to be found in the development of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. By this we mean, not the attainment of a formal dogma or a merely intellectual conception on the subject, but of a living spiritual apprehension, rooted in the experience of faith and shaped by the course of providential history. This sovereignty finds its fullest realization in and towards Israel, the people of the Divine Covenant. What adoption stands for towards the individual in the theology of St. Paul, the Covenant stood for in the divine dealings with Israel. The bond between Jehovah and His people was created by grace, and, in spite of their shortcomings, was upheld by mercy and long-suffering. Yet the unique sovereignty thus enjoyed by the elect nation was therein revealed as being universal and creative. The revelation of Jehovah vouchsafed to Israel contained within itself these wider and deeper elements. God could not be what He is in the life-history of His people and in His purpose of redemption were He not the Creator and Lord of the universe. The declaration, 'I have put My words in thy mouth and have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people' (Isaiah li. 16), gave complete expression to the content of Divine Sovereignty as apprehended by the prophets. Both creation in the past, and re-creation in the future, were implied in the Covenant of Grace. The sovereignty of God embraced these three elements. This was the case because His sovereignty is grounded in His spiritual and ethical perfection. That this perfection should become manifest and find adequate recognition

in the religious life of the people was the divine purpose that inspired the whole course of revelation. It was round this truth that all the conflicts between prophetic and popular religion raged. They all turned upon the issue between spiritual and natural religion. The theology of Isaiah xl. to lxvi. represents the finished product. It is the culmination of the Old Testament, the foundation of the New. Without this great section of prophecy the Epistle to the Ephesians would have been impossible. The sovereignty of God as portrayed by the great prophet of the Exile, though transcended, is fulfilled and lives for ever in the yet greater theology of St. Paul's Roman imprisonment.

This final and noblest explanation of the Divine Sovereignty given in the Old Testament shows in the most striking way its Fatherly significance. Indeed, no such contrast between the Fatherhood and the sovereignty of God is to be found in the Scriptures of either the Old or the New Testament as is assumed by the modern mind. Sovereignty, for the sacred writers, is an essential element and aspect of Fatherhood. It emphasizes authority, the authority of spiritual perfection speaking to the conscience and of creative supremacy made manifest both in nature and in history. Yet this authority, because it is that of spiritual and ethical perfection, cannot reside in the bare will and sheer omnipotence of God. It springs from His inmost character, and that character is revealed in grace. So it comes to pass that Isaiah xl., which magnifies the Divine Creatorship over against the highest and most tenacious form of nature-religion—the worship of the heavenly bodies—ends with the tenderest representation of the Fatherliness of the Creator: 'He giveth power to the faint; and

to him that hath no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint' (Isaiah xl. 29–31). This great word of the Old Testament is a golden link binding it indissolubly to the New.

If we take this culminating utterance of the Old Testament and set it side by side with the Epistle to the Ephesians as in some respects the culminating utterance of the New Testament, we shall see that both are conceived on entirely harmonious lines. In both the revelation of God is contained in a special experience of grace which differentiates those who enjoy it from the rest of mankind. Both move on the transcendent plane of the Divine holiness and perfection. Both treat the whole course of history and the entire universe as moving towards the fulfilment of an eternal purpose of grace which, while it is the free act of God, is the necessary expression of His unspeakable perfection. Both treat the universe as so entirely controlled by the creative sovereignty of God that it is not only subservient to His purpose of grace, but will ultimately be transformed by it. The difference between the two is that which marks the transition from the highest and last word of promise to the word of fulfilment. Jesus Christ is now made manifest as the Fact, the Personality, and therefore the Sphere in which the Divine purpose is realized and set forth. In Christ the Fatherhood is set forth in all its splendour as including, and indeed demanding, all the most august attributes of sovereignty—creative, legislative, and judicial—for the accomplishment of

its Fatherly ends. The transcendence and immanence of the Fatherhood add the finishing touch that perfects the doctrine of the Sovereignty. The Fatherhood gains such full expression in the personal and filial life of believers in Christ as to set aside all superficial distinctions of race, tradition, class, and even previous moral history. Thus the personal relationship reveals its immanent and potential universality. It is left for St John, pursuing the same course as St. Paul, though with his own peculiar emphasis on the Incarnation, to sum up the theology which blends together Fatherhood and Sovereignty, the personal experience and the universal promise, in the sublimely simple definition, 'God is Love' (1 John iv. 16).

At this point a most important question must be faced. Does the evangelical context in which the Fatherhood of God is revealed and experienced in any way shadow its glory or limit its perfection? Many undoubtedly conceive that this is the case. To interpose faith in Christ, the Atonement, adoption, regeneration, and the other conditions of the gospel, between the Fatherhood of God and the sonship of man seems to them an arbitrary proceeding. It arises, they contend, from the undue elaboration of apostolic and especially of Pauline theology to the destruction of the simplicity of Christ. They ask that the Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the Prodigal Son should be treated as containing the whole sum and substance of the gospel, to the exclusion of what they regard as later accretions. It would, however, be easy to show, in opposition to this view, that the Sermon on the Mount, to say nothing of other explicit teachings that must be attributed to Christ Himself, is entirely con-

sistent with the later theology. Most markedly it rests the universal bearings of the Divine Fatherhood upon the differentiating experience of it enjoyed by the Son and by His true disciples. The parable of the Prodigal Son emphasizes certain aspects of the Divine Fatherhood—its indestructible love, its matchless generosity, and its reconciling power—in a way that is enhanced and not qualified, still less contradicted, by the accounts of redemption in Christ given either by Himself or by His apostles. Neither the fact of sin nor its terrible consequences can be obliterated. The glory of the Divine Fatherhood would be destroyed, and its essential meaning perverted, if sin were treated as of small account. The righteousness of God does not conflict with His love nor can be it sacrificed in His dealings without so destroying the spiritual and moral features of His love as in effect to destroy that love itself. Moreover, the Divine Fatherhood is so holy and so infinite that only an adequate Sonship can receive its grace and thereby reflect its content. The constraining love of the Fatherhood is not limited by, but displayed in, the mercy which lifts sinful men out of their degradation and servitude into the new relationship of sonship by the work of redemption in Christ, by His cross and His Spirit. Only thus can His Fatherhood be so based in righteousness as to become eternally secure, so fulfilled in holiness as to be priceless in its spiritual and moral worth. Destroy this evangelical setting, and the Fatherhood is either so impoverished in meaning as to be almost worthless, or so inaccessible that men smitten by the consciousness of sin cannot aspire to its fellowship. St. John gives us in this respect as in so many others the last word that harmonizes all others

when he says, 'The Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world' (1 John iv. 14).

It is on this sure foundation that the universal Fatherhood of God for ever rests. In His dealings with mankind in Christ, and in the joyful fellowship of His love given to believers, the supremacy, the resources, and the world-embracing purpose of His Fatherhood are revealed. That which is made known of Him to believers in Christ contains an abiding and universal promise. Their exceptional experience is not given to the exclusion of others, but proclaims a universal hope for mankind and the universe. The Fatherhood that is final in manifestation and enjoyment is primal as the source of all things and the spring of an eternal purpose that will have mercy upon all. So supremely Fatherly is God that 'every Fatherhood in heaven and on earth' derives its meaning from Him (Eph. iii. 14, 15). His Paternity overflows in creation and becomes both the ground and the archetype upon which society is reared. Love is the bond of all things and of all men because 'love is of God.' Thus every true principle of human action is made in the gospel to rest upon God's Fatherhood: 'Ye shall, therefore, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect,' in the generosity of His dealings with the evil and the good, with the just and the unjust (Matt. v. 43–8). Hence the Fatherhood revealed and enjoyed in Christ, is at last seen to be the essential relationship in which the Love that is God goes forth to the universe alike in creation, redemption, and in fulfilment. In this confidence we may look seeming contradictions in the face, and may be sure either that they are not real, or that, if real, they are not caused by God and cannot be abiding in His universe. The Fatherhood of God speaks

its last prophetic word in the Apocalyptic declaration, 'I saw a new heaven and a new earth' (Rev. xxi. 1). The new will be the consummation through the transformation of the old. It is on this principle that we must seek to justify the ways of God to man. The new world is already beginning to emerge. The movement of all things is unto Christ. If the last consummation be needed it is already guaranteed in the word of promise and in the earnest of experience. Given the principle of freedom both in God and in man without which Fatherhood and sonship will be empty words, even the contradictions are explained. That they will be overborne in the eventual triumph of Holy Love throughout the universe is assured because already the Dayspring has arisen in Christ, who has given us 'access in one Spirit unto the Father,' and thereby to the full satisfaction of our needs and our hopes in the unsearchable riches of Fatherly grace.

VII

THE INCARNATE SON AND HIS ATONING WORK

J. S. Banks, D.D.

Our proper subject is the Atonement in the sense of a satisfaction made in the death of Christ for human sin. A close connexion exists between the Incarnation and the Atonement. As Christ not only offers, but is the propitiation, which forms the ground of Divine forgiveness, extraordinary worth must attach to His personality. Who and what He is in Himself determines the value of all He does. Hence we do not wonder that the phrase, 'The Person and Work of Christ' has been so common in the Church. It is therefore desirable to premise some remarks on the idea of Incarnation existing in the Church from early days to the present. That Christ was perfect man may be taken for granted. We only need to dwell briefly on the Divine side of the Person.

The New Testament view of Christ's Divine character may be best seen by considering first the teaching of the Epistles, and then working back to the Gospels, as is done by Dr. Denney in *Jesus and the Gospel* and Dr. Orr in *The Christian View of God and the World* (ch. vi.). The reason for this course is that the Epistles, which were earlier than the Gospels, express the belief

not only of the writers, but of the churches to which they were addressed. Upon that faith the first Christian churches were built. The position which Christ takes in the faith of these churches is unmistakable. Can any one read the first four Epistles of St. Paul, which are practically undisputed, and see how the writer and the churches place Christ on an equality with the Father, and confess Him as their Saviour, and doubt that to them Christ is in the fullest sense Divine? As a Jew, Paul could never dream of worshipping a creature. Paul's later Epistles only develop the thought of the earlier ones. There is perfect unanimity between Paul's writings and those of the other Apostles on this subject. There is no trace of any difference on the subject between Paul and the Judaizing Christians who assailed him on other grounds. Here, then, we see the way in which Jesus Christ was regarded by the very first Christian preachers and churches, living within a generation of the days of Christ. It is inconceivable that in so short a time such a revolution of thought could have taken place as would be implied in elevating a human teacher, however great, to Divine honours.

Is the view given of Christ in the Epistles borne out by His life as presented in the Gospels? Even in the three Synoptic narratives the authority with which Christ speaks, His demand for absolute obedience and devotion on the part of His disciples, His handling of the Divine law, His claim to be Judge of the world, His promises of spiritual blessings, His lofty spirituality of life and teaching, are best explained as springing from the consciousness of a Divine nature. The fourth Gospel gives expression to what is implicit in the Synoptics. The theology or rationale of St. John is not only

justified, but required by the history of the life. Put the Synoptic Gospels into the hands of an inquirer, and we have no doubt as to the conclusion he would form respecting the nature of Christ's personality. If the Apostles and the earliest Church were mistaken on this cardinal point of faith, the existence and the work of Christianity in the world are the direct outcome of delusion and error.

We must distinguish between the simple doctrine of Christ's Divine person and the theological definition of the fact, such as is given in the Nicene Creed. The definition was not the spontaneous act of the Church of the fourth and fifth centuries, but was called forth by views which were held to contradict the idea of incarnation. One view made Christ merely a superior creature, another mutilated His humanity, a third merged it in the Divine, a fourth was regarded as giving Christ a dual personality. None of the early creeds went beyond this negative task, or professed to be a constructive theory of the Divine-human person. This would be to try to solve the insoluble. The value of the definition for its purpose is inestimable. It guarded Christianity in its beginning from the peril of relapsing into pagan idolatry. And yet we need not think that the definition is either perfect or essential. During the three centuries previous to the age of definition, the Church held as firmly to the fact of the Incarnation as it has done since. To-day the theology of the doctrine, with its definitions and technical terms, is unknown to the vast majority of believers. Ritschlians decline to accept any definition of Christ's Person, viewing it as an attempt to pry into the inscrutable. They refuse to ask, Who or what was Christ in Himself? And they seem to do this chiefly on philosophical grounds. Others criticize the supposition of two natures in

one person as giving no help or as ambiguous. The difficulty is not to criticize, but to construct.[1] We are quite ready to abandon the terms 'Natures' and 'Person' if we can get better substitutes. Dr. W. B. Pope preferred 'subsistence' to 'Person' both in Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity, but it has not been accepted. Fifteen centuries ago Augustine said, in effect, that we used the terms because there were no others.

The changed views as to the relations of the divine and the human have deeply affected thought on the Incarnation. In early times emphasis was laid on the differences between the two; transcendence overshadowed immanence. Now the emphasis is on the likeness and immanence. Faith in incarnation is easier, but there is danger of drifting into Pantheism. We hear much about Divine humanity. New Theology says that Christ is nothing essentially which we are not, or may not become. 'We are all believers in Incarnation,' it is said, 'if you make it wide enough,' i.e. if you do not concentrate it in a single person. This is to make the idea cheap, to agree with the continuous faith in the Church verbally, and to differ by the diameter of a world. We are only able to understand much of the language used on the subject as identifying Divinity with moral qualities apart from any personal subject of the qualities. This is mere quibbling; it is to offer stones instead of bread.

The *Miraculous Birth* is a subject of keen controversy to-day, even among firm believers. We have the account in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. There is nothing to indicate that the story is less literal in meaning than the rest of the

[1] Mackintosh, *Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 292; Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, p. x.

Gospels. The prominence given to the subject is significant. St. Luke's character as a writer of history stands high, as the book of the Acts bears witness. Any objection to the miraculous element applies to much else in the Gospels. St. Mark's Gospel, which does not contain this incident, is more compact of miracle than any of the others.

In Matt. i. 16 there is confusion in the readings. A Syriac version of comparatively slight authority reads as if Joseph were the father of Jesus. He was so legally, and is often so spoken of in the Gospels. Mr. W. C. Allen, in his Commentary, remarks that throughout the genealogy the descent is meant in the legal, not the physical, sense (p. 6). The true reading is reproduced in the English version. How Matthew understood the position is seen in verse 18. As to the section being a later addition Mr. Allen says: 'There is no sufficient ground for supposing that the genealogy ever existed apart from the Gospel.' Mark speaks of Jesus as 'the Son of Mary' and 'the Son of God' (vi. 3, i. 1).

The reference made by some writers to stories of miraculous birth in paganism have little weight. Dr. Sanday writes: 'The Christian tradition belongs to the sphere, not of myth but of history. It is enshrined in documents near in date to the facts, and in which the line of connexion between the record and the fact is still traceable.'[1] Nor does the silence of the rest of the New Testament on the subject surprise us. The nature of the subject is sufficient explanation.

The question whether the miraculous birth was essential to the Incarnation is a speculative one outside Scripture. It resembles another controversial question—whether there would have been

[1] Hastings, *D.B.* ii. p. 647; also 643, 460; *Christ and the Gospels*, ii. p. 804; Mackintosh, op. cit. p. 527.

an Incarnation if there had been no sin. It is evident that in both cases we have no facts, but only inferences from facts to guide us, and can only reach subjective conclusions. Whether we can affirm the necessity of a unique birth or not, its fitness and congruity with the whole picture of the life are impressive.

The significance attached to the Atonement is shown by the fact that it is commonly spoken of as pre-eminently the work of Christ; but this is not meant in an exclusive sense. The Church, while giving to the atoning work along with the Incarnation a central place, does not overlook other parts of His redeeming work. The teaching and the perfect life are also of inexhaustible meaning and priceless worth, and we must make brief reference to them.

The teaching of Christ covers both religion and morals. His first sayings remind us that part of His mission was to perfect the earlier revelation (Matt. v. 17). The fulfilment implies that the old was a designed preparation for the new. The continuity between the two is striking. Each would be very imperfectly understood without the other. The kingdom, which is the first note struck in the gospel, is a central theme in the law and the prophets. Instead of repeating Old Testament truth, Christ assumes and completes it. He does this, e.g. with respect to God. The Fatherhood has close affinity with the old conception of God; and yet the extension would have waited long if it had been left to natural development. It is among Christ's first announcements, and it pervades the whole of the New Testament. The spirituality and other perfections of Deity are quietly implied rather than explicitly announced. The Sermon on the Mount

well illustrates the direction of the new developments. The Ten Words of the Decalogue assume a new character. The Beatitudes reveal a new type of godliness. In the after-teaching ethical truth is everywhere infused with religious principle and motive. Worship and prayer must be in spirit and truth. The idea of service is revolutionized. Self-sacrifice, not self-aggrandisement, is made the universal law of life. All religion and ethics are condensed into two great commands. Love, like God's, is the all-inclusive virtue. The exposition of the kingdom of God and the spiritual teaching of the parables and the miracles are of unique greatness. It is needless to show how Paul's ethical teaching follows in the same line.

The example of a perfect life is a gift as great as the teaching. Each illustrates the other. By either path—by keeping the words or imitating the life—we should reach perfection. The imitation of Christ has been the principle not only of an à Kempis and St. Francis, in a one-sided way, but of the great world of Christians everywhere, with what rich gain to the race every one can see.

Both these works of Christ speak for themselves. When we are asked to prove the authenticity of the Gospels, we may reply, What need of proof? Here are the facts, who the writers were matters little. The chief question is, Are the Gospels transcripts of a real life? If not, they must be the creation of unique genius. Nothing less would be able to sketch such a picture and give it the impress of living reality. If the latter explanation is true, fiction has done more for the cause of truth, knowledge, and religion than all history.

Yet if Christ were merely the peerless Teacher and Pattern, He would not meet our need, nor

would His influence in the world be what it is. We fear that our position would have been made worse. The ideal of righteousness would be raised to the highest point, while our power to obey would remain the same. We need not only more knowledge, but more power. To raise the standard of requirement indefinitely, without increasing the possibility of obedience, would be to mock us. Christ has not done this. What distinguishes Christianity from other religions is its revelation of new sources of moral power for the earnest seeker. It puts us in touch with God Himself. Jesus Christ is Redeemer as well as Guide, the Life as well as the Way and the Truth. Abundant life is His gift, or the Father's gift through Him. Forgiveness is the first step in the way of salvation, and we hope to show that, according to Scripture, forgiveness is inseparable from atonement, and holiness from forgiveness. Thus we easily understand why Christ's work of atonement has always had a foremost place in the faith of Christians. We need all that the Divine Teacher and Pattern are to us. Adoring gratitude is our response for it. But when we say, 'Unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by His blood,' praise reaches its climax.

It is often said that the doctrine of an expiatory Atonement is St. Paul's, and his only; but for St. Paul we should not have known it. Undoubtedly Paul is its chief expositor. There is nothing unnatural in this, any more than in St. John being the Apostle of the Incarnation. St. Paul worked out the doctrine in detail. That he invented it there is no evidence to show, but much to the contrary. John and Peter teach the doctrine in more summary form. Did the Apostle 'born out of due time' teach the older Apostles

a new doctrine of such moment respecting Christ's mission? According to Gal. i. and the tenor of all Paul's letters, his knowledge was independent of the other Apostles. While there is agreement, Paul resents the notion of his dependence on man. In declaring his own faith he also always assumes that he is expressing the faith of the churches to which he is writing. It is incredible that Paul and the other Apostles could have taught the doctrine with such emphasis unless they had Christ's authority for it. Dr. Lidgett well says: 'It is impossible to suppose that the belief in the Atonement could have arisen had it not been founded upon the express teaching of our Lord.' [1] Every reader of Paul's letters must be impressed by the prominence given to the doctrine. It is the keystone of the Christian scheme of salvation in Paul's thought. His language is clear and sober; there is nothing strained or rabbinical in it. He is conscious that the Old Testament and the facts of history are on his side.

The question of atonement is closely bound up with the fact of sin. Sin constitutes the necessity for redemption, and the degree in which we realize the true meaning of sin will determine our view of the need of atonement. Sin is not a revelation of Scripture, but a fact of life. The concern of Scripture with sin is, first, that it insists on the gravity of sin as a personal offence against God; and, secondly, that it points to the way of deliverance from sin. Strictly speaking, sin is against God only. Directly that atonement becomes matter of doubt, men begin to minimize or abolish the idea of sin by ascribing it to necessity or circumstances. But conscience is witness to our freedom and responsibility, which may be modified

[1] *Spiritual Principle of the Atonement*, p. 74.

but not destroyed by outward conditions. Conscience may slumber for a time, but its awaking is sure. A world full of sin, but without means of redemption, would be hell, and God has not so left the world. The note of redemption was struck at the Fall. Then the first gospel was heard, and it was completed in the fullness of time. The terrible nature of sin is evidenced by the ruin and death which are its work, and even more by the cost at which salvation was provided. Salvation costs us nothing, but it cost God much. The Cross is the measure both of the evil of sin in God's sight and of the worth of salvation. The severity of the remedy shows the danger of the disease. Prof. Ihmels of Leipzig writes: 'In many circles the sense of the reality of sin has utterly vanished. It is a vital question for the preaching of the Church that this consciousness should be revived. The entire significance of the Church's doctrine of Atonement depends directly on the Church's doctrine of guilt and sin.'

The verdict of Scripture on sin, which to us is the verdict of God, is supported by the voice of an awakened conscience, by the penalties which in the Divine government of the world are inflicted upon sin, as well as by the keen penitence of the saintliest human souls. In view of these considerations we cannot wonder at the Divine anger at sin, which is simply the reaction of infinite holiness and justice against its deadly enemy. No one who duly weighs such considerations will doubt that the problem of forgiveness is more than one of simple mercy. Is no vindication of the Divine law of holiness necessary or fitting? And this is what is meant by Anselm's references to the Divine 'honour' and 'satisfaction.' His argument has been the target of many

cavils, but at least it recognized that the question has a divine as well as a human side.[1] The interests of the supreme justice as well as of the supreme mercy are involved. Paul felt that something had to be done to show that, while God justified the ungodly, He himself remained just. The purpose of propitiation was to manifest the righteousness of God even in the remission of sin. Any other doctrine fails to treat the idea of sin and atonement with sufficient seriousness.

Scripture relates the origin of sin in the world, but it has no theory of its absolute origin. Sin came into the world from without. The many theories which derive sin absolutely from the constitution of human nature or the nature of matter and spirit, throw the blame on the Author of nature, and make sin inevitable; they are, therefore, inadmissible. The story of the Fall (Gen. iii. 16) reads like a story of temptation to-day. The first sin, like every sin, had its source in an act of free-will, in spirit yielding to sense, not in sense coercing spirit. It was conscious disobedience not merely to law, but to a lawgiver. In his moral life man has to do with a personal God, not with impersonal law; and this makes all the difference. The sense of guilt and self-condemnation, of right-doing and satisfaction, implies relation to a person. Scripture everywhere makes law, not a mere order of cause and effect, but an expression of personal will. God's anger and love are the anger and love of a person. The payment of satisfaction is to a person; forgiveness is a personal act. If the Scripture law of righteousness were merely a Stoic order of nature, there would be no

[1] Dr. Denney speaks of the *Cur Deus Homo*, while admitting that details are open to criticism, as 'the truest and greatest book on the Atonement that has ever been written' (op. cit. p. 295).

question of atonement or forgiveness. But the relations of the moral and spiritual world are relations between persons. Dr. Dale's idea of satisfaction to abstract law, apart from God, is too little.

The transmission of sin is by the law of heredity and solidarity. But to the idea of original sin we must add original grace, one from the first Adam, the other from the Second. No passage of Scripture has been more misunderstood than Rom. v. 12–21. Its direct subject is not a narrow, hard doctrine of inherited sin from Adam, but a free, unconditional, universal inheritance of grace from Christ. 'As through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so through one man righteousness entered into the world, and life through righteousness.' The last thought is the one uppermost in Paul's mind. Certainly the personal experience of righteousness is conditional; no moral life could be otherwise. Augustine says: 'God, who made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves.' But the provision is unconditional. No passage in St. Paul speaks more explicitly of God's universal grace than this. Every one is born both under sin and under grace. The old antithesis of the natural man and the spiritual man without restriction is unscriptural. Wesley is right in saying, 'There is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God.' F. H. Bradley says virtually the same: 'The existence of two selves in a man, a better self which takes pleasure in the good, and a worse self which makes for the bad, is a fact too plain to be denied.' [1]

[1] In Orr's *Christian View of God and the World*, pp. 192, 204. See the whole of Lecture V.

It must not be forgotten that, if sin has reigned from the time of the Fall, the same is true of grace (Rom. v. 21). The two powers are coeval; but, according to Paul, grace is the greater power. 'Sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly.' A true instinct has seen a protevangelium in Gen. iii. 15. All Scripture is a gospel; its theme is the origin, course, and triumph of redemption. Evolution is said to exclude the Fall. Absolute evolution might do so, but this has never been proved. The evolution we know is consistent with new departures. The reign of grace is seen in the compensating laws of sympathy, vicarious suffering, sacrifice and love which are the basis of intercessory prayer and of every form of human helpfulness.

The apostolic doctrine of objective Atonement, then, is that Christ, as the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, opened the way for the free exercise of mercy on God's part without reflection on the Divine justice. The sufficiency of the propitiation cannot be doubted. It was made independently of us. The experience of its benefits is conditional on our acceptance of God's terms, but not the fact of atonement. Whether we are actually saved or not, we are redeemed. All obstacles on the side of the supreme holiness to pardon are removed. The fact that the propitiation is a Divine gift does not lower, but heightens its value. It is a great enhancement of the gift. Not only salvation, but the ground of salvation is a provision of Divine mercy, and an unconditional provision. This provision is the content of the gospel proclamation (2 Cor. v. 21).

This leads us to observe that the objective doctrine does not overlook, but includes, the subjective side of the truth. The objective doctrine

makes an appeal to, and constitutes a claim on, the human heart such as no other doctrine does. The submission of the Sinless One to humiliation and death was wonderful condescension, but His coming into contact with human sin, even as the propitiation for it, was far more wonderful. That He did this by Divine appointment is emphatically said. God set Him forth in this character. 'Him who knew no sin God made to be sin on our behalf.' 'The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' 'With His stripes we are healed,' and much more. It is only when we see in Him the world's Sin-bearer that we understand the agony in the garden. Thus the largest meaning is given to grace as the sole source of redemption. God 'spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.' 'By grace ye were saved through faith.' 'God, who is rich in mercy.' 'God so loved the world as to give His only Son.' 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me,' thus 'signifying by what manner of death He should die.' It may be said that, if the Atonement has met the claims of law on sinners, no moral condition on our part is necessary or possible. But moral beings cannot be disposed of, bought and sold, without their consent. Good cannot be forced on us, any more than evil. In other words, our consent is necessary to, or a condition of, our final destiny. We are redeemed, salvation is provided, without part or lot of ours; but free acceptance is a necessary condition of actual participation. The most powerful motive to win such consent, and to ensure the repentance necessary on our part is, not merely God's promise of mercy, but what He has already done in making and accepting the satisfaction which opens the door of forgiveness. In a word, God's work of atonement, 'full,

perfect, and sufficient,' is the strongest motive-power to repentance. It tells us not merely what God has said, but what, before any act of ours, He has done to secure our salvation.

The exclusively subjective view of the doctrine which, rejecting propitiation, makes the death of Christ simply a demonstration of love, lacks such motive-power. Love must be shown in the conferring of practical benefit. No one can show love to another by throwing his life away, or sacrificing it without strong necessity. On the subjective view all that Christ's death did was to attest His sincerity and fidelity as a great Teacher and Example of religion, reducing Him to the status of a faithful martyr. Would that justify what the Apostles say of the transcendent love of God expressed in the Cross, or exercise the power on men's hearts which the ordinary doctrine has exercised ? [1]

On the other hand, the fact of the sinless Son of God standing in the sinner's place, assuming his responsibilities, rendering to God's law the satisfaction which the sinner owed, but could not pay, and so opening the way for restoration to God's favour, is the highest conceivable demonstration of love. We have no doubt that, apart from the priceless benefit conferred, the recognition of the supremacy of the Divine claims will appeal strongly to the sense of right in man wherever conscience is awake. This, added to the unique form which

[1] See also Denney, *Death of Christ*, new ed. p. 127. The Rev. W. Temple says : ' Abelard's theory does not show *how* the death of Christ is a manifestation of love. If it was a vicarious satisfaction, it was such a manifestation, but (at first sight) not otherwise. Christ was indeed full of love ; but how can that love lead Him to die ? ' (*Foundations*, p. 242). Abelard (12th cent.) was the first to teach, in opposition to Bernard and Anselm, that the death manifested love only.

the manifestation of love takes, is a motive of transcendent force. But is it possible? Is it morally right? St. Paul and St. John felt no difficulty (Rom. v. 8; 1 John iv. 10). They do not find the two ideas of love and propitiation irreconcilable. On the contrary, they point to the atoning purpose as the climax of God's love. For our part, we trust the moral judgement of men trained in the Old Testament school of righteousness. Let us recollect that Christ bears, and is made, sin in the sense of bearing its penal consequences. There is no question of transferring sin itself to Christ. It will be denied, of course, that we can separate sin and penalty, and transfer one without the other. What, then, of the separation and transfer which transpires daily in the world's government and in human life? It is possible, in virtue of the solidaric constitution of the race, just as sympathy, mutual help, self-sacrificing love are effective for the same reason. Life would be inconceivably harder without this compensating force. Vicarious suffering, the law of substitution, is the spring of philanthropy and self-denying service in every form. It would be passing strange if Divine love could not express itself in this way. The passion of the Cross is the supreme example of this law.[1] Jesus Christ was more than a member of the race like ourselves: He was the Second Head of the race, the medium of universal life and blessing, as the First Head had been the medium of universal death and evil. 'As we have borne the image of the earthy (Adam), we are to bear the image of the heavenly (Adam).' Friends and parents gladly bear the consequences

[1] 'To impeach the justice of this is to impeach the justice of an organic constitution of the race' (Orr, *Christian View of God and the World*, p. 363).

of the wrong-doing of those they love, buoyed up by the hope of averting evil from them. The wrong is in those who do it, not in those who suffer through it. Christ in His death is the world's supreme example of the principle He advanced in the most unqualified form, that to lose life in the service of love is to save it, and to save it by a selfish spirit is to lose it. By dying the seed bears much fruit (John x. 17 ; xii. 24).

Can we doubt that the Apostles make the love of the Atonement so prominent in their writings because they themselves preached it in this way ? That love is the great apologetic of the Christian scheme, the unanswerable reply to all reflections on the Divine goodness based on the world's sin and suffering. In appealing to it we are appealing, not merely to what God has said, but to what He has done. What could He do more ? What stronger ground of faith can we desire ? Nothing affects us more than to find others repaying evil we have done them with good. This is the principle of the Atonement in the highest degree. What pathos there is in the words, 'While we were yet sinners' ! For persecutors and enemies, for faithless Peter and for Paul—'a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious' Christ died ! This motive has not lost its power, and never will. Evangelists to-day find in it their most powerful weapon. 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely [as a free gift] give us all things ?' There is an argument in every phrase of this verse.

In order to do full justice to the significance of the Atonement, we must take into account its effects in actual experience. Dr. Moberly rightly maintains the close connexion between Christ's

provision and the Divine Spirit's administration of redemption. Calvary and Pentecost, he holds, are a unity in the divine thought, and they cannot be understood apart. 'An exposition of atonement which leaves out Pentecost leaves the Atonement unintelligible—in relation to us. For what is the real consummation of the Atonement to be? It is to be—the Spirit of the Crucified becomes our spirit—ourselves translated into the Spirit of the Crucified'[1] The work of the Spirit in us is just as necessary as the work of the Redeemer for us, and it is just as universal, free, and effectual. The truth of this is seen in reference both to prevenient and saving grace.

As to the first, the teaching of Paul and of all Scripture is on the widest scale. The work of grace in seeking, drawing, pleading with man for God knows no limit of place, time, or person. Everywhere and always grace reigns, not sin (Rom. v. 12–21). The Holy Spirit's work in producing conviction of sin and inspiring faith is as real and perfect as the Redeemer's work of redemption. Both may be frustrated, but their truth and power are undoubted. In the Spirit God is ever seeking and finding man. Our seeking God is the response to His seeking. Of the place which atoning love holds in this process we have already spoken.

Still more where the Divine search issues in obedient faith the work of the Spirit is an essential factor. From first to last the Holy Spirit is the great Sanctifier. His constant title in Scripture bears witness to this truth. The virtues which constitute the Christian character are 'the fruit of the Spirit'; and this fruit, again, is the best evidence of the fact of forgiveness both to the

[1] *Atonement and Personality*, p. 151.

forgiven and to others. The regenerate man is 'born of the Spirit,' and this is to be 'born of God.' There is no reason whatever for thinking that St. Paul's doctrine of salvation is a limited or partial one. There were some in his own day who alleged that his account of forgiveness failed to recognize the need of holiness. The accusation is quoted in Rom. vi. 1 and answered in verse 2: 'How can one who died to sin continue to live therein?' The answer plainly implies that a believer dies to sin when he is justified or forgiven; and this view runs through the apostle's entire teaching (Rom. vi. 11, 18). The same idea is repeated in the believer's identification with Christ's death and resurrection, the two statements including the outward and inward, the negative and positive sides of the spiritual transformation. Rom. viii. 1–4, 9–11 also present the same double picture. Gal. ii. 20 and vi. 14 say the same. Paul is not afraid of paradox in speaking on such themes. 'Crucified—yet I live!' A seeming death is a rising to a glorious life! Even life 'in the flesh,' the earthly, natural life, shares in the change, for it is now a life 'in faith.' The new life is again and again said to be life 'in Christ,' or 'in the Spirit.' The terms are used interchangeably, showing distinctly the ceaseless co-operation between the Son and the Spirit: 'The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ' (Rom. viii. 9–11). 'Could anything make clearer the absolute identity of the presence of Christ with the presence of the Spirit of Christ?'[1] Just as forgiveness and holiness are combined in the commencement of the new life and together form the experience of salvation or eternal life, so the indwelling Christ and the indwelling Spirit are inseparably united

[1] Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 198.

in that experience, and are the spring of all power and goodness. When first forgiven, we are also 'sanctified in Christ Jesus, called Jesus Christ's, called saints,' and so we continue (1 Cor. i. 2, Rom. i. 6, 7). The two blessings, or the two parts of the one 'free gift' of God, are inseparable; where one is, the other is. The agreement of St. John's teaching with St. Paul, as seen in 1 John i. 7, 9; ii. 1 f., is worthy of notice. Here the Holy Spirit is not mentioned, but His presence must be supplied from other passages. We only need, further, to point out the bearing of propitiation on this line of thought. That forgiveness is everywhere specially connected with Christ's death is well known. Forgiveness in such a case must have an additional value and security in a measureless degree. Our living, personal union with Christ by faith secures our participation in all that He does as our Representative, and so in His perfect propitiatory work. The removal of sin is the removal of the only hindrance to the free, unhindered carrying out of the mind of Christ and the Spirit in us. With confidence we pray:

> Be of sin the double cure,
> Save from wrath and make me pure.

An objection made to the necessity of mediation is, that, as Christ makes forgiveness of others a condition of God's forgiveness of us, the same law must apply much more to God. But this assumes that our relation to others is the same as the Divine. Ours is a private relation only; any public relation changes the position at once. If we are charged with public responsibility, forgiveness in this capacity is no longer at our disposal. The difference between us and God in this respect puts all comparison out of sight. He

is the supreme guardian of perfect righteousness and justice. The same qualification applies to the fatherly relation and forgiveness. Public duty limits private authority, even the paternal.

A similar comment applies to the use of the parable of the Prodigal against the need of satisfaction for sin. No parable is meant to illustrate every part of the case under consideration. Every parable isolates one aspect of the case in order to set it in strong relief. The parable of the Prodigal emphasizes the freeness and spontaneity of the father's welcome, and this is pre-eminently true of God's free gift of eternal life. Both the gift and the medium ('through Jesus Christ our Lord') have their source in God's love. Salvation through atonement is more wonderful, more worthy of God, and more adequate to our needs, than salvation otherwise.

One of the many gains of recent thought is the dismissal of all idea of antagonism between the Father and the Son in the work of redemption. God's love is not the effect, but the cause, of the atonement. The doctrine of the Trinity helps us in the difficulty. While all Divine action is that of the whole Godhead, the different 'Persons' may have a different emphasis in particular directions without prejudice to the others. The anger and the love are of the whole Godhead. There can be no separation; yet there may be differences of Divine economy. Our words and thoughts halt before the mystery. We are only sure that a mystery of holy love is at the heart of all. It is often said that anger and love cannot co-exist in God towards the same persons. They co-exist in us. Do not the same persons stand in different relations to each other at the same time? Anger at wrong-doing need not even suspend the central

love. Much more is this true of the heavenly Father. Our strongest certainty is that God's greatest work—a lost world's redemption—expresses the mind of the entire Godhead, and yet in some special sense it has its spring in the Father (John iii. 16). What a Giver and Gift! Still the Son 'gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.' In the one all-comprehensive gift of Christ all other gifts are ours—grace, love, communion. 'How shall He not?' Paul asks. He who has given the greater must give the less. Necessity of love is laid upon Him, and to that necessity the Divine resources are equal.

A convincing discussion of the relation of the Divine Fatherhood to atonement will be found in Dr. Lidgett's work already referred to (ch. v.). The author strongly maintains that the Fatherly relation is the final and sufficient character in which God is revealed to us. But it is no weak, sentimental Fatherhood. On the contrary, it is 'by necessity legislative and judicial.' Instead of doing away with the relationships of Creator, King, and Judge, it includes them 'in a higher and larger whole.' The justice of the father is stricter, his need of satisfaction for wrong-doing greater, than that of a judge. 'In dealing with a disobedient and rebellious child, the father has to do justice to his own character and will as an authority over the child—an authority representing the ideal of what the child should become, and guiding him on the way to its realization. He has to assert the sanctity of the law which has been broken and to secure its recognition.'[1] The ideal fatherhood, instead of abrogating the judicial function, makes it an inalienable element of paternal obligation.

[1] Op. cit. p. 268.

The common disparagement of atonement as forensic, legal, juridical, is singularly perverse. So far as these terms are used in a disparaging sense, they might be applied to all judicial acts without exception. There is nothing narrow, unworthy, Judaic in Paul's idea of atonement as satisfaction to law. The law meant is the moral law in the broadest sense, the law written on the tables of the heart by God's finger (Rom. ii. 15), and drawn out in detail in revelation. 'The law of Moses never means for Paul anything less than the law of God; it is one specific form in which the universal relations subsisting between God and man, and making religion and morality possible, have found historical expression.' [1] The Jewish ethic was simply God's law at a particular stage of development. The Sermon on the Mount is another stage.

In these days of religious indifference and abounding worldliness we do well to remember how often the gospel of the Cross has rekindled the dying fire of Christian zeal and sacrifice and drawn men in masses to God. It does this because it reveals to us the very heart of God, reveals to us love in its purest, most essential form. It did this in the revival of the thirteenth century, in the mission of the Preaching Friars. We are surely right in believing that the Cross was not only in the hands and words, but in the hearts of the intrepid missioners. The news of redemption was the chief motive-power of the Reformation, when the accretions that had hampered the truth were stripped off. The success of the preaching of the Cross is not an accident, but a law, as sure in its action as a law of nature. Should we not try it with more insistence? Will a Christianity with

[1] Denney, *The Death of Christ*, p. 271 ff.

any other content appeal to the common heart of man with such power or win such victories over sin and unbelief? Will it inspire the same passion for God and holiness? 'Divers portions and divers manners' were a note of prophetic and apostolic appeal. The form of preaching changes with every generation. Let its message be that of Paul, of John, and of Jesus Himself.

VIII

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

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WE purpose in the following essay to deal with the work of the Holy Spirit in the history of doctrine. We can imagine no theme more important, for the matter goes to the root of the organized life of the churches. Nor is this all. Upon the answer given to this question will depend whether or not the Christian can conceive of any theory of history in which place can be found for the workings of God. That the forces which underlie the activities of men are not blind, but rather are moving toward some goal that as yet we do not see, by ways which we cannot always discern, is to the Christian a self-evident truth. If we cannot prove this conclusion from our incomplete survey of history itself, we deduce it from the fundamental premises of our faith. The kingdom of heaven may not come with observation; nevertheless we believe that it is slowly rising in our midst. At times we catch glimpses of the Master-builder laying deep the foundations or building thereon an imperishable structure. If this is true of secular history, much more is it true of the Church. For the Christian the history of the Church cannot be other than the story of the growth of the Kingdom of God and of its doctrines. However difficult may be the discovery

of the laws of this growth, that such laws exist must be axiomatic for all who believe in the Kingdom itself. In the study of ecclesiastical history we find more than the mutable actions of weak or passionate humanity. That in such history human nature exists, passionate enough and mutable enough, we do not deny. But in considering the final design it is the Potter that counts even more than the clay; the wheel and the Hand that turns it are fashioning out an ordered result.

We begin, then, this essay with this postulate: that the history of the Church, both in its activities and in its variations of doctrines, is the story of the workings of the Divine Potter. Underlying all the phenomena of spiritual life and thought, we may discern, if we will, the energies of the Holy Spirit. For the Christian thinker we cannot, in fact, understand any other standpoint. The story of the Church, the history of its doctrines, is not the dull record of purposeless wanderings amid shifting sands of strife, sterility, death, or change; nor can it be constructed by the postulation of *a priori* conditions to which its phenomena must bend or be rejected. In any scientific study of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit we must form our ideas of the growth of the Kingdom, not by enunciating *a priori* dogmas, but from observation of the conditions under which He has worked who has produced in different forms and divers manners that continuity of life of which in all ages He is the Lord and Giver.

One other postulate is involved in our position: The history of the Church is a history of development. With the final form that the life and doctrine of the Church may assume we are not concerned; this we are content to leave to the Will

of the Spirit, whose immanence in all such growth we dare not deny. But running through all the ages we see ever-developing purpose, ever-expanding ideas. The life of the Church is a life of ceaseless growth; not only externally, as witnessed in expanding borders, in missionary conquests, in nobler ethics; but internally, in her ideas of truth, and in the development of the dogmas in which she seeks to express them. As the result of this development the implicit of one age becomes the explicit of the next. Life in its richness is ever assuming varied forms, while conserving the one mystical unity. These new forms, in their turn, lead to the apprehension of deeper ideas.

A concrete example will best show our meaning. The doctrine of the Trinity, so vaguely stated even by the Apostles, so imperfectly apprehended in the second century, becomes the clear conviction of the fourth, acquiring a terminology, not the less valuable because the outcome of new needs which forced the Church for its definitions outside the Bible. Theories of the Atonement which to Anselm and his generation were convincing, necessarily gave place in later days to other ideas. Thus every age—provided always that the age or movement possesses the necessary *continuum* or continuity of life—contributes something to the unfolding of the one eternal truth, to the making explicit the whole consciousness of God. The question, therefore, arising from any spiritual movement is not the existence of any mechanical connexion with something which has preceded it, whether in the first or nineteenth centuries, but is the fact of its life, of the idea that that life embodies, of its contribution, temporary or permanent, to the total of truth and to the heritage of mankind, of the causes which have led it to

outlive its usefulness, or have enabled it to take an enduring place among the forces that make for righteousness; in a word, of its fidelity to the call of the Spirit of God, by whose breath it was called into being, and whose purposes its existence has fulfilled. That accomplished, it may pass away, like Judaism, or yield to higher forms which owe their life to its being. And that which is true of every spiritual movement is equally true of the ideas or doctrines from which it springs.

To most of our readers these postulates may seem self-evident truisms. A few, however, may hesitate to admit their validity, wondering whither they will lead. To such in the following pages we would specially direct our argument. We imagine that the chief difficulty that has to be faced in looking upon the growth of doctrine as an illustration of the work of the Spirit arises from the common conception of truth as something external and rigid. That there are such truths we do not deny; the facts of arithmetic, the details of geography, may be adduced as illustrations. But the majority of our beliefs, including all our spiritual apperceptions, are not of this order. They do not belong to the sphere of the external and demonstrable, but to that of the internal and living; they are organic and not inorganic; they are a function of life, rather than a postulate of logic or the record of observation; in a word, they have all that variety and growth which is the very essence of life itself. They have also, in consequence, this difference: facts are but part of the furniture of the mind; beliefs, on the contrary, are an essential part of the mind itself.

Our knowledge of an arithmetical or geographical fact is absolute and stationary; our beliefs, on the

contrary, only cease to grow with the death of thought. Especially is this true of the great spiritual ideas which we call the doctrines of the Church. To think of these dogmas as deductions by unchanging syllogisms from certain premises of logic or intuition is an incomplete and false idea of their origin. Their appeal is to the higher logic of life itself; they demonstrate their rights by other processes than ratiocination; they must be judged, as ultimately all the higher truths must be judged, by the place they hold and the purpose they fulfil in human experience. In a word, abstraction from reality, fatal in any science, is never so disastrous as in theology. To separate dogma from life and experience—the common mistake of text-books of theology—to treat it as if it were something external and rigid, a matter of definitions and *a priori* deductions, is much the same as if the biologist were to strip the flesh from the bones and in the resulting skeleton to seek for the great secret. But this life and experience from which dogma and doctrine must not be abstracted is no mere biological growth, no naturalistic process. For the Christian this life and experience is essentially the work of the Holy Spirit, the expression of His personality, the fulfilment of the promise of the sending of the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth.

Once more we will try to explain our meaning by an illustration. For the purpose we will take the doctrines of the Person of Christ that are associated with Nicea. Now, these doctrines, when abstracted or taken by themselves—studied, that is as the products of logic or as deductions from Scripture—become unintelligible, or, at least, seem conclusions unwarranted by their premises. As such they have been mistaken for the results of a philo-

sophical spirit alien to Christianity, intruding with its noisy jargon into what would otherwise have been a holy of holies. The mistake is not without some justification. No doubt the controversies of the fourth century, especially when looked at from a distance, often hide the real life of the Church. But that is just because we insist on abstracting them, i.e. looking at them from a distance, divorced from their environment of life. In consequence we exaggerate the details of their logical processes, instead of grasping the root of life from which they sprang. For in spite of the crude, metaphysical terms with which the struggle abounds, the cause of contention at Nicea and its issues were not metaphysical at all. The controversies on the Person of Christ were not, as is so often supposed, the outcome of Hellenistic logic attempting to express itself in a system of speculative theology. Such an explanation, we repeat, is totally inadequate, and has only arisen from the excessive abstraction of thought from life. On the contrary, those doctrines were the direct result of the richness and breadth of the spiritual experiences which men felt they owed to the Saviour. The Nicene Creed is thus, in reality, the attempt to express this richness of life in definitions. The task, we grant, was impossible of attainment; none the less its origin and meaning should not be obscured.

The matter is of such importance that we shall do well to consider it more fully. Nicea studied in connexion with the three hundred years of struggle that preceded it becomes no longer the arena of contending syllogisms, but a crown laid at the feet of the triumphant Christ. At Nicea many of the bishops of the dominant party still bore in their persons the marks of the sufferings

they had endured for their Lord. Only a few years of peace severed the Council from the three centuries of blood and fire through which the Church had been called to pass. That the Church in the hour of her triumph should consent to abate in the smallest iota the full rights of Christ was impossible. Veterans do not so easily forget their Chief. For the Church, by adopting the tenets of Arius, to deny the Lord and Master for whom she had suffered all things, by whom she had conquered all, would have been an ingratitude so complete that it would have left the victory she had won more marvellous still because totally unexplained. Now, the test of any definition, whether in physics or in theology, is its power of fitting in with the facts of life. Judged by this test, the theologians of Nicea may be indifferent to criticism. Poor at best as the definitions must be in which they attempted to express all that Christ had meant to them, yet their definitions have survived the wear and tear of centuries just because in a real way they embodied vital experiences. The twentieth century may not approve of fourth-century metaphysics, and may be bewildered by terms some of which have lost their meaning. Nevertheless, the creeds of Nicea and Chalcedon remain because there was in them the dynamic of a living truth. If they had been but a bold, splendid piece of constructive metaphysics, the completion of the Greek quest after a scientific expression of God, they would have perished, at any rate so far as they were distinctively Greek. They have lived, because they are among the affirmatives and imperatives which from time to time surge up in consciousness, and which carry a larger authority than belongs to any dialectic. Their value does not lie in their

accordance with objective reality, for of that, in the nature of things, we are unable to judge—'no man hath seen God at any time'[1]—but in the complete explanation they give of the deepest facts of experience and history. 'Those men make merry in vain who think there was but an iota of difference between the contending parties at Nicea, or that it was a strife about terms. Athanasius stood forth at Nicea as the exponent of the deeper soul in every man's soul, for in him was seen a man whose deep spiritual needs had made him cry aloud for the living God, and who then declared that in Christ this need had been met. His whole intense spiritual experience stood to affirm that it was no delegate of the Most High, no matter how august, that had met him in Christ Jesus and pardoned his sins and filled him with new life, but *very God of very God;* and it was with a view to this central experience that he accepted a term that passed beyond Scripture and affirmed of the Son that He was of *one substance with the Father*. Terms were of little moment, and probably Athanasius cared little for them; the fact was everything, and the terms only had value if they did justice to the facts of a profound experience.'[2]

We have dwelt thus fully on the doctrines of Nicea for a twofold reason. There is no creed, with the exception of the hymn mistakenly associated with the name of Athanasius, which at first sight seems more completely the expression of pure dialectics; there is no creed which, on deeper study, resolves itself more fully into the fundamental facts of experience and life. Nicea,

[1] Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε, κ.τ.λ. The order of the words is of importance for the argument.

[2] Professor Armitage in *Hibbert Journal*, July 1910, p. 848.

in fact, is a perfect illustration and indication of our main contention, the identity of truth and life—that the two are the same function operating in different spheres. Now, the characteristics of life are twofold. Life demonstrates itself not by its uniformity, but by its variety; it is only the dead that is uniform. Even more important is the second characteristic. The essence of life is growth; the fossil, on the contrary, is dead because incapable of further modification in structure or further adaptation in use. These two facts, variety and growth or modification, are the marks of all Life. They are equally also the marks of all Truth. That which is uniform in outlook and changeless in content is necessarily limited—at any rate for the Western thinker as distinct from the Buddhist. Now, the fullness of a truth is not demonstrated by mechanical uniformity, but by the width of its appeal. There is neither 'language nor speech where its voice is not heard'; but, as on the day of Pentecost, that voice speaks in different tongues to different men. Truth, also, is eternal just in so far as it is capable of satisfying not one age but every age, of expanding with the expanding thought of the centuries; our very conception of it as truth is dependent upon its power of satisfying the expanding ages. To this power of satisfaction it owes its whole authority; in this power of satisfaction we trace the ceaseless operation of the Spirit.

We may reach the same conclusion by a different line of approach. There was a philosophy, the full fruition of which appeared in the middle years of the nineteenth century, which looked upon the larger organizations of life, e.g. the State, the Church, the Family, as but little more

than collections of individuals, and which attempted to build up the laws of their growth from an analysis, more or less accurate, of the laws of growth of their component parts. To-day thinkers of all schools recognize that underlying this method there was a great fallacy. Social organizations are not collections of atoms; they have a life of their own, a soul of their own, and conditions of growth of their own. The psychology of the forces which sway a mob cannot be reached by the study of the psychology of the individuals which make it up. There is a psychology of the mob itself. So with the State. The older doctrines of the origin of growth of the State treated it as a collection of units, from whose actions the necessary consequences could be deduced by *a priori* logic. Such a method failed utterly because it took no account of the State's oversoul—the most important fact in the life of every State—and so, necessarily, could not succeed in presenting any true conception of social origins and development. The appreciation of this great truth of the soul of the organization lies at the root of all modern Economics and Sociology. The older Economics—the 'dismal science'—because of its blindness to this law, reduced everything to that monstrous abstraction, the Economic Man. This shallow Individualism, which rightly drew down the wrath of Carlyle, forgot the elemental truth, that the soul which underlies all movements makes the whole larger than the sum of its parts.

There was a similar danger in many of the older Church historians and in almost all of the text-books of Theology. Their method of treatment was too individualistic; they looked at all things from the standpoint of this age or of that century.

They had no conception of life and growth, and in consequence eliminated the time element, with fatal results to the study of doctrine. They forgot that the Church, in a far wider and deeper sense than the State, is an organization and not the sum-total of its individuals. Through the absence of any biological conceptions—we shall attempt later to estimate more accurately what this means—their criticisms were often hopeless anachronisms. They judged the relations of the Papacy to the Barbarians, and the methods by which the Church subjugated the passions of primitive man from the standpoint of the modern democratic parliamentarian. They failed, as Gibbon did, to understand the story of the Crusades because they persisted in ignoring the spirit which animated them. The Middle Ages —dubbed by this complacent school the Dark Ages—became unintelligible because no attempt was made to interpret them in terms of their own thinking, instead of reducing them to the shibboleths of a more 'illuminated' day. The Reformation, or the Puritan movement, were alike approached not from within, but from without, and in consequence remained without, with results appalling to the historical student. Now, in all these instances—and they might be multiplied indefinitely—the failure sprang from not discerning that the Church has a life of its own and a development of its own, and that, furthermore, this life and development are alike the work and manifestation of the Spirit. When once the history of the Church is approached from this standpoint, its life and thought assume a new meaning. We see a purpose running through all its stages of change and growth. We behold, though it be but in a glass darkly, the plan upon

which the Master-builder is working. We begin to understand, though not without difficulties, what is meant by the great promise that the Paraclete shall guide into all truth. The space between, said Novalis, is the way thither ; but the space between is now illuminated with the light of His presence.

At this point it were well to interpose a word of caution. This belief that in the Church we may ever discern the life of the Spirit does not mean that the Church is always 'perfect'—this last is one of those useless terms, when used in this connexion, for which it is difficult to find a meaning which does not at once explain it as the 'imperfect.' But it does mean that through all the history of the Church we may see the working of the Spirit of God, using and adapting the Church to His ends, and ever making its life the organ through which at sundry times and in divers manners He manifests Himself to man. Every page in its long annals bears the impress upon it of His signature, and he that hath eyes may read therein His message.

But it is time that we passed to the bearing of these postulates upon Truth and Doctrine. Truth, as we have already stated, is one of the functions of life. By this we do not mean that it is naturalistic or even biological ; we mean that it cannot be reached except by life, and that wherever there is life there we find the basis of the real or the true. As one of the functions of life, truth has its laws of growth and development. This development is in part determined by the relation of truth to environment. 'When I was a child, I thought as a child' is not the condemnation of the child's outlook as unreal ; it merely states a fact, and lays emphasis upon a stage

in growth. 'When I became a man I put away childish things' is of far wider application than to the nursery. Such a statement does but give proper emphasis to the law of progress, at work as much in the world of thought and of the spiritual as in the sphere of the organic.

Thus the history of the Church on one of its sides, is the study of the development of man's conceptions of Truth. As a result of the critical investigations of the last thirty years we now see that doctrines have a life of their own and a development of their own. Doctrines and dogmas are in nowise stereotyped, lifeless formulae. If they were, they would soon have perished in a world that is itself in constant flux. But they live and persist, because they are ever adapting themselves, through their own inherent vitality, to the needs and outlook of successive centuries.

A simple illustration may make our meaning clearer. We will take the doctrine of the Atonement. Few doctrines are more cardinal. Here, if anywhere, we strike bed-rock. Here, if anywhere, we might perhaps expect a changeless formula or explication. As a matter of fact, there is no doctrine which has more changed from age to age both in its formula and its explication. The reason is not far to seek. Just because it is a fundamental fact of life there is no doctrine which has more powerfully demonstrated its vitality, by its unceasing attempt to interpret itself in new terms to the life and thought of successive ages. The Cross and the Divine Sufferer remain the same, but the superscription written thereon is in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin.

In the fifth century the doctrine of the Atonement expressed itself in harsh Augustinian terms, the echoes of which are still heard among us;

in the sixth century it took refuge in what appears to us to-day the puerile conception of a redemption from a debt due to Satan, to which Gregory the Great added the repulsive feature, as it seems to us now, that the devil made a bad bargain; in the twelfth century we have the forensic interpretation of Anselm, who, in his *Cur Deus Homo*, destroys the essential ethical unity of the Godhead by his revival of the old Gnostic Dualism within the Divine Nature itself between justice and love, and by his implication of an antagonism between the Son and the Father as representative of different attributes, the One who pays and the One who exacts.[1] Anselm's wholly external and institutional conception of salvation, so satisfactory to the institutional forensic age in which it was moulded, was followed by the larger idea of Abelard with its emphasis upon reconciliation through personal fellowship with Christ. But this doctrine of Abelard had no influence; it was too big for the century in which it was born. And so we might go on, if our limits allowed, tracing the ever-widening realization of the meaning of the Atonement, and its ever-deepening expression in Aquinas, Calvin, Arminius, and Wesley, to say nothing of the new light thrown upon it in recent days by the emphasis of the Fatherhood of God. And that which is true of the Atonement is equally true of doctrines far less fundamental. Theology is not a lifeless science; on the contrary, when delivered from the thraldom of the *a priori* dogmatists, it is the study of ceaseless life and growth.

There are two deductions which we think the

[1] The reader should note the very different value given to *Cur Deus Homo* on pp. 166–7, *supra*. See further, on this matter, Workman, *Christian Thought to the Reformation*, pp. 125 f.

student will make from any careful survey of the varying expression of any doctrine, for instance of the Atonement; especially if he attempts to correlate the various doctrines with their environment—and without such correlation Theology becomes sterile Dogmatics. In the first place, he will notice the correspondence between the expression of the doctrine in any age and the life of the Church in that age. The two, in fact, become almost one: the life produces the doctrine; the doctrine reflects itself in the life. But we have here no vicious circle, for the circle itself is ever moving onward. He will further notice that throughout the centuries there is continuous expansion. In certain quarters we hear much talk about putting ourselves back into the mind of the 'undivided church in the fourth century,' or into that of the fourteenth century. Such talk is meaningless and anachronistic. The man who should attempt it in any church, even in the Church of Rome, however naturally conservative in outlook and temper, would soon make it manifest to the critical observer that he attempted a task that was hopelessly beyond him. He might utter the shibboleths of past days, but a slight examination would reveal that the words he used, while possibly in outer form the same, had become strangely polarized in their transit through the centuries. There are no banks of time on which a man can stand and look at the waters as they whirl past. For instance, there is not a clause of the Apostles' Creed into which the Church is not reading, slowly, imperceptibly, but none the less surely, either new or larger meanings; they prove their vitality, as we have already insisted, by the way in which they thus expand with the expanding ages. The 'communion of

Saints,' to take one illustration, as viewed by us to-day, is a far larger fact than the narrow conception of it to which it owed in the fifth century its first introduction. Only if they cease to be vital truths do the articles of our faith cease to grow and expand. Because it is a vital truth our belief in God as 'Creator of heaven and earth'—to take an instance, selected from an article that expresses a primal, almost universal consciousness—demands to be interpreted to-day through all the resources of Science. Thus by the work of the Spirit of God we find Saul also among the prophets, Darwin joined to the company of theologians. Every age brings out of its store-room things new and old; every age has its hidden ideas, its locked treasures, and its 'Open Sesame' by which they are revealed.

Some of our readers may possibly conceive that we have wandered somewhat far afield from our original text. We set out to study the work of the Holy Spirit in the history of Doctrine; and we have dwelt for the most part upon growth and its relation to life. At this point it is advisable to insist upon the close connexion of our theme with our argument. For the life that underlies the history and doctrine of the Church, which has given to that history and doctrine all its richness of variety and its wealth of meaning, of which, in fact, that history and doctrine are but the translation into human symbols, is none other than the life of the Spirit of God Himself.

There is a theological conception of history which is but little different from pure naturalism. Such a conception forgets the fundamental distinction between God and His world, and identifies the life of the Spirit with the imperfect organ in which that life works itself out. Such a conception

drifts into an optimistic Pantheism, and must not be confounded with the conception for which we have pleaded. The biological conception of church history, as we may call it, with its exaggeration of the immanence of God, does not give scope for the effects of sin or the play of selfishness. Its logic compels it to look upon the follies, as well as the wisdom of the Church, as equally a phase of the same life. With such a conception we have no sympathy; its ultimate end must be the negation of all upward striving, and the reduction of all things to the same dead level. Very different is the true doctrine of the immanence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. By this we do not understand that all doctrine, in all its changes and moods, as well as all the facts of church life and history, have been alike the outcome of the Spirit's energies. In every organism there are times of disease, retarded growth, ossification, and the like. So also with the Church. There are times of weakness and danger, of lowered spiritual vitality, of apparent mortification. But these are the exceptions, not the rule. To the student the outstanding fact about the Church throughout her long history is her amazing vitality. Even in the hours of her greatest weakness there has never been a moment when her spiritual life has not been overwhelmingly greater than all the symptoms of disease. Hence we may confidently claim that throughout the history of the Church, if only we study the broad effects rather than concentrate attention on the human details, as well as throughout the growth of doctrine, we may ever see the working of the Spirit of God, and behold the constant adaptation of the Church to His ends, the constant unfolding of the fullness

of His ideas. And, as in the past, so in the present and to-morrow. We live in a new age, with new ideas surging up around us. To live in the past, to cling to formulas that, perhaps, have lost their meaning, is as impossible as it is valueless. But Jesus Christ is the same to-day as for our fathers; and by the guidance of His Spirit we may step out fearlessly into the uncertainties, assured that He will lead us into all truth provided always that we keep a firm hold upon the great certainty of His presence. Where there is life and love there can be no abiding doubt, no real uncertainty; what may seem doubt or uncertainty is but a transient though painful phase of adjustment in the progress of life. As in the first century, so in the twentieth, this word 'Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain.'

IX

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUPERNATURAL

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THE wistful longing that moves at the heart of the modern perplexity in regard to matters of faith is the desire to be 'very sure of God.' The most searching questions men and women who are reached by the prevailing spirit of unrest put to themselves and to one another, are concerned with the relation of God to His world. Are the processes of the world its own, or God's? When we yield to the fascination and authority of Evolution, are we departing with a heart of unbelief from the living God? Does faith in miracle involve the surrender of our confidence in the reign of law? When we meditate upon the ways of Providence, are we touching a Father's guiding hand, or only studying the changeless perfection of a ceaseless mechanism of material forces? Do our prayers reach God, and move the Hand that moves the world, or do they only return to quiet our hearts into acquiescence with the reasonableness of 'this dance of plastic circumstance' in which we are encircled? What do we mean when we speak of the word of God in revelation and the breath of His inspiration in the souls of men? How are we to account for

the realities of our personal religious experience—by the direct operation of the indwelling Spirit of God, or as a cycle of complex natural emotions, for which a complete psychological analysis can adequately account?

It is not difficult to perceive that such a series of interrogations meet in the central problem of the mutual relations of what we call 'natural' and 'supernatural.' We wish therefore to call attention to the strong probability that many of the perplexing questions relating to the interpretation of the Christian Faith to the present generation may turn ultimately upon the meaning attached to the term 'supernatural.' Grave confusion inevitably arises when the distinction between 'natural' and 'supernatural' is presented in such antithetical terms as to imply that they are mutually exclusive, and form distinct categories. Dr. Sanday reminds us that 'we require a new way of conceiving the supernatural.' Whilst this is not an easy way to discover, much in the atmosphere and tendencies of scientific and religious thinking is happily helpful to the task of restating the distinction we seek. There is a growing disposition in several planes of thought to be dissatisfied with the adequacy of the explanation, formerly considered sufficient, offered by Naturalism. It is increasingly admitted in science and philosophy that such an explanation of Reality must always leave a most important remainder. To this remainder the name 'Spiritual' is constantly being applied. Eucken is only one amongst many who emphasize the fact that the interpretations of nature given by Naturalism 'cannot perform their own tasks without drawing incessantly upon another kind of reality, one richer and more substantial; this in itself shows

beyond possibility of refutation that they do not fill the whole of life.'

To the highest scientific minds also, the range of reality is a great enigma; scientific doctrine in relation to the All is acknowledged to be at best hypothesis. The universe is so vast, so complicated in its parts, so rich in surprise, so full of new and inscrutable potencies, that with our present knowledge it is not possible to say what is or is not within the range of the possible expression of its secrets. It is infinitely deeper than its known laws indicate; there is everywhere room for the 'spiritual'; often indeed obvious occasion for it as the only workable hypothesis. If we could substitute this term for 'supernatural,' no scientific dogmatism, to say the least, would be arrayed against it, and a temper much more acquiescent than agnostic would express the mind of science towards it. It is generally acknowledged that Materialism has been overestimated. Taken at its full value as a method of explaining the ultimate constitution of the All in Nature, in terms of matter and motion, it falls short. We have no knowledge of matter apart from mind; our knowledge of it postulates the spiritual. It is safe to say that the 'natural' does not exhaust reality. Something exists that may be termed 'supernatural.' What is this?

The answer will obviously depend upon the definition given to 'natural.' Here two alternatives present themselves. Nature may be regarded as merely a mechanical system. This implies that, whilst it is admissible that the order of nature owes its origin to the creative power and wisdom of the Divine, it is now a self-running system, at present and always complete in itself. It is a scheme of material things with no need for God

except as its transcendent cause. Within this order inherent forces and fixed laws initiate and maintain the cosmic processes; the world is not spiritual but physical in its constitution. Its laws are entities in themselves; these guide and control the masterly mechanism of the universe; they are its ultimate mystery; whatever can be referred to the laws of Nature is sufficiently explained without higher reference; when effects are described as 'simply natural' it is implied that Nature brings them about by her own inherent power, and that she is responsible for their order in time and in relation to other events antecedent or subsequent. In this conception of nature God is only a provisional hypothesis required as a First Cause in virtue of the Law of Causation inherent in Nature.

Now with this view of Nature as a closed system of mechanical order, it is evident that the supernatural can only be conceived as an intervention from without into the realm of a complete and sufficient natural order, interrupting it, suspending or contravening its laws, breaking through with the arresting signs of a transcendent Power. Hence God and Nature have been set apart, conceived as different categories of reality, as independent, if not rival, powers.

Thus the supernatural has come to stand for the occasional triumph, for specially important ends, of the Divine Worker over the material order regularly exhibited in Nature. Consequently it became difficult to avoid thinking of Nature as in some way opposed to Revelation, and to the religion based upon it. This bold and independent Naturalism was met, in the interests of Revealed Religion, with an equally bold assertion of direct interferences of the Divine Will in the form of

miracle. It is easy to see why this doctrine of Divine Occasionalism deliberately infringing the Law of Continuity in Nature has met with determined opposition from a generation seriously convinced of the truth that Nature reveals, through all the vastness of her realm and in the marvels of her minutest processes, the reign of law. If, therefore, the establishment of the reality and supremacy of the supernatural is dependent upon the disestablishment of the certainty impressed upon the minds of men by the reverent study of Nature, the acceptance of it is gravely imperilled. Indeed it is only fair to say that, to many minds with the will to believe, the possibility of faith, in presence of the wider knowledge of the uniformities of God's working in nature, is almost unthinkable; whilst its implications of the undivineness of the natural and the unnaturalness of the Divine have become the source of a popular heresy which has wrought mischievously against the interests of spiritual religion. The Christian not less than the scientific thinker recognizes the inalienable connexion of cause and effect. He cannot look to God for mere magic. The Christian view of the supernatural can never, therefore, admit consistently that the sure and wise order of nature can be violated, even for the purpose of saving a doctrine of Miracle.

Fortunately, the conception of 'natural' as synonymous with mechanical is not the only available method of interpretation open to us; there is another, a wiser and more Christian view, to which we must now briefly refer. This is the immanental theory of Nature. It asserts that Nature is the sphere of the immanent activity of God; it is not a closed system: its energies and laws are not ultimate realities, which bind the

universe into a perfected causal nexus; they are simply modes of the Divine activity—the form of God's self-expression. The order of Nature has no intrinsic causality; it is a series of related sequences, and therefore in a truly causal sense it explains nothing; it cannot do anything on its own account; of itself it initiates no new departures. The laws of Nature, strictly speaking, accomplish nothing; they cannot: they derive the necessary character we attribute to them from God's will alone; for if Nature is dependent upon His creative activity at its origin, it is equally dependent upon His presence for its executive processes. Of each and all of these, His purpose is the immanent force and final cause as well as the ultimate origin. Evolution, for instance, is simply a method discernible in the natural order; it achieves nothing, develops nothing of itself; it is simply a term found convenient for registering the results of a scientific observation of the immanent activity, in the progressive development of Nature, of the living God who is the only original Worker therein. Nature relieves God of no labour, of no responsibility; it affords Him no leave of absence from His created universe; He is the ever-present ground of its progressive changes; the cosmic order is neither His rival nor His delegate. Here, as in all other ultimates in which we securely rest, Jesus speaks the last word for the Christian interpreter of God's world: 'My Father worketh even until now.'

Such a view of 'natural' as results from the application of the conception of the Divine Immanence to the world-order leaves us with a very different conception of the 'supernatural' from that inevitable where the mechanical view of the universe is maintained. The supernatural is now

no longer the interference with or the contradiction of the natural, but its complement. Nature is God's usual sphere of activity, but it does not exhaust His power and purpose. He is immanent in the natural, but He transcends it. For whilst it is no longer legitimate to think that God is compelled to enter into the natural as an intrusion from without, disturbing it, and thereby denying its order and stability, in order to demonstrate His supernatural presence and activity, yet at any given time, God's purpose is only partially realized in the known uniformities of Nature. Finality is not reached; He is greater than all that is; the reserves of His wisdom and power are greater than His revelation of them. It is no reflection upon the perfectness of His prevenient wisdom that at a chosen moment the natural order shall exhibit a fresh direction of His activity, an arresting sign of His presence in some new departure in the line of His purpose, a new beginning not accounted for by known physical antecedents traceable in the causal nexus of Nature. Each instant the universe actually contains an unexhausted fullness of possibilities. Which of these shall be realized, and when, is not rigidly determined by the known conditions of the universe, though they are always reached in harmony with these conditions. At any moment there may be a new beginning, which is more than the sum of all the antecedent conditions discovered in Nature. The mysterious possibilities of the operation of free spirit in Nature are affecting many scientific minds as with a prescient sense. Comparatively few scientists to-day believe that natural science is the exclusive measure of all forms of truth and possibility, or that freedom can be reduced to the mere recognition of and acquiescence in logical necessity.

Naturalism and Intellectualism, as satisfying systems, are bankrupt. In many unexpected directions the conviction is deepening that throughout Nature there are new beginnings, analogous to that which is creatively new in the domain of spirit. To explain its processes without a spiritual remainder—a 'supernatural'—seems less and less possible to natural science; whilst the philosophy which is dominant—that represented, for instance, by Eucken and Bergson—is distinctly spiritual. Room is deliberately left for the inscrutable and incalculable. Activism and Vitalism are but thin disguises for conceptions leading up to the Christian estimate of the supernatural. For the essence of this estimate we consider to be the truth that the universe, though rational and to be interpreted rationally, is more than rational; it is ultimately personal. To approach, therefore, the relation of God to the order of Nature through the conception of a perfect Personality is not only the best mode of access for us, who are ourselves persons, it is also the method which enables us most surely to discern an immediate presence of God in operations which lie beyond the explained and the normal in Nature.

To assume that the present state or the known order of Nature is a limit within which the activity of God must be confined is to conceive of Him as less free than ourselves. For whatever the form of our habitual action, we can, and do, act in moral crises by the assertion of our personality in modes that are original and spontaneous, and which are a surprise to ourselves and to others. Is God, the perfect personality, less free? If, then, the Christian man thinks of the activity of Nature in terms of personality, as he ought to do according to Christ's teaching,

the supernatural will not be less credible than the natural. If, however, he thinks, as is too frequently the case, of the activities of Nature in terms of mechanism, the supernatural must become more incredible as the natural order widens its domain, and as interferences and suspensions are reduced to a minimum. At the same time, suspicion of the reign of law in God's universe tends to become ultimately suspicion of the beauty and authority of God's presence in it; and this, according to the teaching of Jesus, is a denial of the faith.

We may now perceive that the supernatural is to be connected primarily with causality, not with method in Nature; it is teleological. Its true synonym is 'spiritual.' By this is meant the personal direction in a realm of ends, and by a Living God, of all phenomenal processes towards the fulfilment of a perfect ethical and spiritual purpose. This end supplies the Christian interpretation of all God's self-manifestation—in usual and unusual events alike—within a universe of law. The natural in this case signifies the law in process; the supernatural the end to which it is directed. These are two modes of knowledge, relative to the same events—the knowledge of causes as known antecedents to effects, and the knowledge of the purpose which the effects are designed to serve. Christian faith concerns itself with the latter aspect of knowledge; its interest is in meanings and values; and, because these are dependent upon God's disclosures to the spirit of man and not discernible either by the methods of natural science or by the speculative reason of the natural man, they are rightly spoken of as supernatural; 'they are spiritually discerned.' But the knowledge of the facts, the meaning of which

is thus supernaturally discerned, is natural and open to the scientific reason to investigate and define; it belongs indeed to the scientific interpreter as of right, and must be left to him. Within his own sphere he must not be interfered with. But he has done his work when he has given the only explanation of the facts possible to him; that is, when he has related the phenomena he investigates to a more general order of sequences which he knows as natural laws. But his fact has not then received its final explanation; only its changes have been defined, its mode of 'becoming' stated; its real meaning is not in what it is, but in that to which it is tending, its purpose; its reality is teleological—that is, it is 'supernatural,' or, in scriptural phrase, it is 'spiritual.' 'Supernatural' is not a scriptural term.

Truly understood, then, the natural involves the supernatural, and the supernatural implies the natural. They are not mutually exclusive; they are simply different points of view from which the ceaseless Divine activity in the world may be considered. The supernatural is the personal—the purposeful—in the midst of the sequences which constitute the natural; it is the natural seen in its spiritual significance. The natural is the supernatural, finding expression in forms which make possible the discovery in time and space of its permanent worth and meaning. Events and occasions experienced by men are natural in that they are in harmony with an appointed order, and supernatural in that they immediately touch that perfect Personality whose loving will is that by which all things stand and from which they for ever proceed.

In order to coincide with the significance of the supernatural thus interpreted, miracle will

exhibit two aspects—a characteristic unusualness in its appearance in the physical order, and the revelation of a meaning or purpose in the moral or spiritual order. This double aspect of miracle is characteristic of the miracles of the New Testament. They are at once 'wonders' (*τέρατα*) and 'signs' (*σημεῖα*). Their impact as arresting phenomena upon the observation of men accustomed to the normal in Nature is implied in the former term; their revelation to the conscience and spiritual sense of the message of the living God, immediately active in the phenomena, is the significance of the latter. Unceasingly the New Testament lays the emphasis upon this latter aspect. The former is comparatively incidental; at best it is simply the means of securing attention to the latter. If it fails to do this it is reckoned of little account. To seek the wonder and to remain blind to the sign meets with the vehement condemnation of Jesus. The wonder can do nothing of itself, except darken the vision and harden the heart of the beholder. Wonders cease to be miracles, in the ministry of Jesus, if they cease to be recognized as signs. Miracles are only such when they are aids to faith, and when they enrich the soul with a fuller apprehension of God's sure presence and purpose. Unless they convey this meaning they are not in the true sense supernatural. In the teaching of Jesus the supernatural lies in the spiritual knowledge communicated by miracle, not in the physical event; the merely marvellous would be wrongly called supernatural. To become supernatural, events in the physical order must enable men to trace the finger of God, writing in time the word of eternity.

Too often, and with unhappy effects upon faith, both scientific and Christian emphasis has fallen

upon the physical wonder in miracle rather than upon its spiritual sign. The objections of the scientist, and the misgivings of the Christian, have been based upon a greatly exaggerated value attached to the physical event. Miracle has been isolated as though it were merely, or even primarily, an occurrence in the physical order; it has been discounted or defended solely on this basis, whereas its paramount interest must lie, according to the Christian view, with its religious message to the soul. These two meanings do not necessarily lie together. 'Wonders' are miracles in the scientific sense; they are not such in the religious sense. There are also miracles, in the religious sense, which have ceased to be wonders—that is, inexplicable events—in the scientific sense; for a remarkable event with a spiritual significance does not cease to be a miracle, or supernatural, in the religious sense, when in later days it may be explained by reference to natural law.

An event is not, therefore, the more miraculous the more mysterious and inexplicable it is. If it is only this, it is not a miracle at all in the Christian sense; for the function of a miracle is to reveal the Divine purpose, not to hide it from reason and conscience. Otherwise such an event is an act of magic—a mere arbitrary power of the superhuman. Miracle is the expression of the ethical quality in God's character rather than the glorifying of His might. And if, as we have previously suggested, the supernatural is ultimately a problem of personality and its self-interpretation—a mode of communication by a personal spirit through the unaccustomed uses to which it puts matter—miracle will usually be associated with the appearances and activities of great personalities, who awaken their fellows to

a more intimate sense of the presence of God. This is supremely true of the miracles of Jesus.

Moreover, moral affinity is essential for the percipient that wonders may become supernatural signs. There is no miracle, in the Christian sense, save to faith. Otherwise the belief in Christ's supernatural authority, to which His miracles at times gave rise, was regarded by Him as destitute of ethical value; it was not faith, but superstition, over which He grieved. Miracle that is magic is as incredible—and as undesirable—in religion as in science. Empirically, therefore, we cannot expect to prove the supernatural; it cannot be demonstrated apart from the religious susceptibility we call faith. But it is of the nature of faith to be at the same time less and more than scientific demonstration; its conditions of certainty are ethical rather than intellectual; and its irrefragable experiences are accessible to every one who is willing to accept the spiritual conditions by which men see God. At the same time we may assert most categorically that such a position meets with no legitimate and sustained objection, as to its rational basis, from the assured certainties upon which it is the business of natural science to insist. It is only a belated science that still denies the possibility of the supernatural and its miraculous expressions. 'The notion that science is gradually enabling us to dispense with God is superficial almost to illiteracy.'[1] We shall return later to the consideration of the scientific attitude.

The significance of the supernatural, however, is by no means exhausted by its application to miracles, as these occur within the physical order of the universe. Its deeper and more

[1] Bowne, *Immanence of God*, p. 23.

permanent meaning is found in what, for the sake of distinction, we speak of as spiritual miracles. These give the quality of continuity to the activity of the supernatural, without which it is liable to sink to the level of occasionalism. To insist on the characteristic of rarity as essential to the significance of the supernatural is to deprive it of its distinctively Christian value. The supernatural is never in repose; it is the activity on which all other activities depend. Spiritual miracles are the new beginnings which mark the transcendent manifestation of the Divine in the midst of the immanent forces of the world as God's ageless purpose. Not only is the reality of these freely admitted by many who hesitate to accept the miraculous in the physical order; but they appear also to be the evidence of the supernatural best suited to the mind of the living generation, because they are constantly being wrought, and in a realm accessible to all who are willing to fulfil the ethical conditions for discerning them. If God be the living God, and this world is His, it must be possible for us to recognize His presence with men by His present working as well as by His working in the past. 'Religion,' Wendland observes, 'is much too modest when satisfied with insistence on the transcendent factor entering the universe, as an immanently connected whole, only in rare and isolated cases. It ought to insist, in regard to all events which demand a religious interpretation, that God's transcendence is perpetually working new things within the immanent structure of the world.'[1]

The spiritual life is essentially supernatural. No human life is conditioned solely by the present state of the physical universe, or by the deter-

[1] *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 18.

mined effects of its past operations; it is open to new possibilities. The reality of the regeneration of a human life by spiritual energies is a perpetual proof of the presence of the supernatural. The unquestionable experiences of the power of prayer, and the divine energies of grace operating in response to repentance and faith, the transformation of human lives into the beauty of holiness, despite the most untoward contradictions in antecedent character and in physical environment, are credentials of the supernatural which appeal to the impartial observer. The effects produced by the impact of the personality of Jesus upon heathen minds, and the swift creation of new ethical histories—pure, heroic, sacrificial—which result from this contact, are beyond the explanation of things 'born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man'; they are of God. A Christian man knows he owes his spiritual life, not to the order of Nature, but to the mysterious order of God's grace; his conversion, the crucial and classic experience of his deepest, surest moral self, is a consciousness of Reality, which, though it may be mediated through the factors of his natural life, is more than they are capable of explaining. Whilst wrought within the inherent capacities of his physical nature, and registered in effects of which his rational nature is aware, the change cannot be referred to adequate natural antecedents; it can only be accounted for by a reference to the entering of the immediate power of the living God into contact with his natural life. Such a man into whose life God has come as Redeemer and Renewer has in this wonder of wonders the ultimate credential of the supernatural.

It was to such men that the Christian faith owed its first and most convincing testimony as

to the significance and reality of the supernatural. The belief in the Christian miracles was based fundamentally upon the Christian experience. Wanting that foundation, the events so characterized would have been recorded, if recorded at all, according to the prevailing ideas of the age, as 'wonders' or 'portents.' It was the experience of the spiritual facts of personal redemption, verifiable and verified by multitudes, that gave to such credible records the supernatural quality that made them in the Christian sense miracles. The miracles of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, which stood foremost in the earliest Christian tradition, were assured when men knew the miracle of the Divine forgiveness in their own souls and attributed that experience, as they were compelled to do, to the direct operation of the power of 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; Him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay; whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it' (Acts ii. 24). If in this Jesus they had forgiveness of sins, He must be God; for none can forgive sins save God only. If in this same Jesus they had also the sure consciousness of eternal life, He must be alive; a dead Christ could not raise the dead to walk in newness of life. Jesus was Himself the supreme miracle.

The Virgin Birth, the empty grave, the appearances of the resurrection day, were of cardinal importance historically; but the realities of Incarnation and Resurrection had their

strongest ground of appeal, to a rational faith, in the absolute certainty afforded by the vital experiences of the Divine life men had found in Jesus Christ the Lord. The specific miracles recorded in the Gospels offered such rational and historical justification as would in due time be sought in order to harmonize these spiritual experiences with the intellectual desire for sufficient evidence. But ultimately the supernatural experience, whilst it could not assure the scientific historicity of the events as recorded, did assure the supernatural character of them and gave them their place in the faith of the Church. The evidence of the supernatural is itself supernatural. In the Christian view, the miracles of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, though as to history temporal, are ethically and spiritually timeless; they are abiding processes by which children of men are continually becoming children of God and children of the Resurrection. These processes constitute the highest evidence of their supernatural quality. If the Divine self-impartation of the Divine life of which the Incarnation and Resurrection were the signs and seals in humanity, had not persisted in men who recognized in Jesus 'the first-born among many brethren,' and 'the first-born from the dead,' the historical incidents as recorded would have faded, as all merely historical values do, into the remote influences of a dead past. For mere wonders in history inevitably dwindle through scepticism into insignificance, or smoulder with lapse of time to extinction. The continuity of their vitality is a sure sign of their supernatural character. Only the living is the supernatural, for the supernatural can be present only with the presence of the living God.

We may very briefly illustrate this view of the significance of the supernatural by reference to the fundamental miracle of the Christian faith—the Resurrection. This was no mere spectacular epilogue to the earthly career of Jesus. It marks the point at which His sovereign power as Lord of Life was made effective. He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, in the sense that He now was possessed of the power to realize in human lives a salvation which is union with God Himself. The Resurrection is not only the crisis in the Church's apprehension of the Person of her Lord, but the secret of the mystery and continuity of her own existence; her supernatural experience is her testimony to the supernatural reality of her Source. The Resurrection created the Christian faith and sustained it; and the newness of life communicated by the risen Christ, who is alive for evermore, became in turn the verification of the historical Resurrection. Resurrection is a process—a persistence of the new beginning witnessed in the historical Resurrection of Jesus—which is perpetually at work in the world, a Divine quickening in human nature which, through self-sacrifice, raises the souls of men to live beyond the physical incident called death.[1] When, through faith in and mystical fellowship with the living Christ, men discovered that they too lived 'not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again,' the demonstration of the spiritual reality of the Resurrection was already theirs; and with great power they gave their witness to the faith. This evidence is at least sufficient to prove the supernatural significance of the Resurrection—that it transcends the natural order; it also crowns the

[1] Cf. J. H. Skrine, *Miracle and History*, p. 40.

proof of the superiority of spirit over matter by meeting the demand Christian faith must always make upon the supernatural—that it should be redemptional. The Resurrection was essential to the intense redemptional activity we see at work in the New Testament; for nothing that Jesus said or did, apart from His Resurrection, could account for the life there witnessed; the memory of His words, the ideals He preached, the sinless life He lived, were inadequate apart from His Resurrection.

Moreover, the fact that a redemptional purpose, so urgent and important, was being actually fulfilled in human nature as the issue of the faith in the historic Resurrection is a value-judgement of much weight in appealing in favour of its credibility. If the acceptance of the historic fact had made no ethical difference to those who believed it, if it had left them spiritually where it found them, men would soon have ceased to regard the story constituting the Christian tradition. But when faith in the fact delivered men from the coarse degradations of sensual habit and transfigured their lives with the radiance of unworldly love, the story could no longer be regarded as an insulated historical incident; ethical attestation gave the strength of antecedent probability to the testimony for it. It then became obviously part of a moral order of relations and results. The spiritual fact of the Resurrection thus raised into a Gospel of the Resurrection was demonstrated in redemptional achievements.

In calling attention, however, to the great importance of the spiritual attestations of the truth of the Resurrection to be found in the transformation of the apostles, in the birth of the Church, and in the persistence to this day of the spiritual vitality that men who know Jesus

infallibly attribute to the power of His resurrection life within them, we do not desire to suggest that such inward witness alone can establish the historical fact of the Resurrection. That must be dealt with according to the canons of historical criticism. It forms part of the general problem of the trustworthiness of the Gospels which is dealt with in an earlier essay.[1] But we are bound to plead, in considering the abiding significance of the supernatural, that something of our appreciation of the witnesses will always depend upon the moral issues, in the highest plane of human life, of their faith in the fact to which their testimony is borne. It is scarcely possible to believe that what lies behind the greatest moral changes that the world has seen can be a pathetic pathological illusion.

On the other hand we cannot accept, as satisfying all the requirements of the Christian faith in the Resurrection, the attitude of those who are so preoccupied with the spiritual significance of the Resurrection that they sit loosely to the importance of the historical fact itself. Harnack's position that the Easter Faith by which men live consistently in 'the conviction of the victory of the Crucified over death, and of the power and righteousness of God,' is independent of the Easter Message of the empty grave and of the credibility of the appearances of the risen Jesus, breaks down. It fails adequately to harmonize with the position that, according to Harnack himself, Paul preached the fact of the Resurrection within a year of the event itself. At so early a date this fundamental miracle was accepted as the common faith by the men who experienced a transcendent spiritual change as the result of their faith. On

[1] *The Gospels in History and in Life*, pp. 95–116.

the same ground, we should urge that the assertion of others that the faith produced the message as its self-justification is too dogmatic to commend itself. Still we think it extremely desirable, in the interests of Christian faith in our own generation, that we should seek primarily to justify the supernatural reality of the Resurrection, and of other Christian miracles, by evidence supernatural in its values and validity, such as is afforded by the infallible certainties of the Christian consciousness, with its personal experiences of redemption.

In the case of the Resurrection, we begin at the wrong end, as Dr. Denney suggests,[1] when we begin with 'the intricate and perhaps insoluble literary and historical problems' of the narratives in the Gospels. These 'are quite the least important part of the evidence.' 'If we do not accept the Resurrection on grounds which lie outside this area we shall not accept it on these grounds. The real historical evidence for the Resurrection is the fact that it was believed, preached, propagated, and produced its fruit in the new phenomenon of the Christian Church long before any of our Gospels were written. This is not to depreciate what the Gospels say, but to put the question on its true basis. Faith in the Resurrection was not only prevalent, but immensely powerful before any of our New Testament books were written. Not one of them would ever have been written but for that faith.' 'It is not the story of the empty tomb, or of the appearing of Jesus in Jerusalem or Galilee which is the primary evidence for the Resurrection: it is the New Testament itself.' The life that throbs in the New Testament is, from beginning to end, the life which the risen Saviour has quickened in Christian souls.

[1] *Jesus and the Gospel*, p. 110 ff.

'The evidence for the Resurrection is the existence of theChurch in that extraordinary spiritual vitality which confronts us in the New Testament.' 'These incomparable phenomena in human history are left without adequate or convincing explanation, if the Resurrection of Jesus be denied.'

The attitude of science and philosophy towards an interpretation of the supernatural which bases it upon the facts of the spiritual consciousness in recognizing the presence and operation of the living God is more than tolerant; it is distinctly sympathetic. Neither natural science nor history can deny the reality of the supernatural, unless they claim for themselves to exhaust the truth and reality of the universe—a claim which the scientific mind of to-day is far from making.

There are two interesting tendencies clearly discernible in the attitude of scientific and philosophical thinking, which leave the way of faith in the reality of the supernatural easily accessible to the spiritual nature of man, and at the same time break down the supposition that the mechanical view of the order of Nature presents us with scientific finality. One is the conviction that the notion of the rigid uniformity of Nature must yield to the truer conception of the unity of Nature. Uniformity is a conception derived from the empirical sphere, and all such conceptions lose their significance when applied to the cosmos as a whole; for this is too vast for any experience to enclose. Mr. A. J. Balfour, in his recent Gifford Lectures, has been pressing home such fundamental questions upon the scientific consciousness. Even the primary conceptions of the Regularity of Nature, the doctrine of Atomism, and the principle of Conservation of Energy, he urges, lie in reality much more within the category

of 'tendencies, inclinations to believe, probabilities, which guide the course of human speculation' than within that of ascertained and fixed uniformities. They are part of the unity of Nature, which is itself a spiritual conception which it is impossible to account for in a closed system of impersonal forces. Material unity is never known; all we know of matter is diversity; we do not meet with unity in sensible experience; the mind finds it within itself, and thence transfers it to the outer universe by analogy; it is not empirically derived. Whilst Mr. Balfour has been lecturing at Glasgow, M. Henri Bergson has been lecturing in Paris to 'show that the evolutionary process in Nature can only be conceived as being in its essence psychical, and that there is not only room in it for creation, but necessity for it, though not special creation but "creative evolution."' In any case, the more persistently the trend of science is towards the assertion of the unity rather than the uniformity of nature, the more does the conviction deepen that Nature is grounded in spirit, whose function is to exercise perfect control over the physical order for its own ends. There is, therefore, not only room for the supernatural, there is antecedent probability that its working will be discerned by new beginnings, which cannot be accounted for by known physical antecedents.

The other tendency is for the scientific mind to admit that it has no concern with the supernatural as religiously interpreted. It can neither confirm nor reject the reality represented by the supernatural; its function is simply with the regular sequences occurring in space and time as known to phenomenal experience. What lies beyond the known in the natural order—and it is increasingly admitted that there is an inexplicable re-

mainder implied in the known—is not the business of science, and must not be forced upon its acceptance. When, in the mystery of 'becoming,' new and strange beginnings emerge for which it cannot account, science is wisely reticent; it is sure there is a cause adequate to the inexplicable effect. It will, therefore, search and wait, and not deny the effect, because the whole cause is not at present discoverable. If other minds profess to discern signs of a spiritual order higher than the known physical process, and an ethical purpose therein warranting such a new event in the sphere of reality, science will not deny its possibility, although it can find no place for it within the sphere of the uniformities of the natural. The supernatural is no longer excluded from belief because it is profoundly inexplicable to science. Not only is physical nature too vast for interpretation by known law, but it is admitted that the spiritual must be regarded as a co-efficient of Nature; for all causation runs up eventually into the spiritual. The spiritual interpretation of causation is constantly gaining ground; physical causes are not originative; they are only sequences, which transmit causation. Huxley's dictum of half a century ago now much more nearly represents the common scientific attitude—'denying the possibility of miracle seems to be quite as unjustifiable as speculative Atheism.'

X

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

H. Bisseker, M.A.

I

To what extent does the Christian experience possess an evidential value? Does it, in any sense, afford a proof that the religious presuppositions on which it rests are true? That this is the case the Christian himself has long been accustomed to maintain. But such an assertion is challenged with assurance by more than one type of unbeliever. While the mental processes involved are admittedly real, the Christian's interpretation of them is declared to be at fault. The experiences concerned, it is urged, are *subjective* in character, and therefore furnish no adequate guarantee that they are not based upon delusion. It is of inward impressions, as we plainly must allow, that they are uniformly constituted. Why, then, may they not be initiated solely within the mind of the believer, without resort to an External Source in order to account for them?

The first reply would be that, while religious experiences[1] are subjective in character, they are

[1] In view of the limited scope of the present essay, and to secure brevity of expression, the phrase 'religious experience' may be taken to imply *Christian* experience unless the broader reference be definitely indicated by the context.

not so in any sense that would imply a false individualism. It is true that the knowledge of God that we claim is originally derived from inward impressions. But *so is all knowledge of every kind whatsoever.* The general method of knowledge is simple and familiar: (1) We are conscious of certain inward impressions, which acquire an increasing influence in our minds as they are found to be in harmony with the rest of our experience; (2) we check these impressions by the experience of others, whose minds under similar conditions have been similarly receptive; and (3) if they are unconfirmed by this comparison, we think of them as open to suspicion; but if they meet with strict corroboration, we henceforth hold them to be vindicated, and regard them as constituting a valid basis of 'knowledge.' It is by such a process that all our knowledge is acquired. And the conditions it lays down we accept unreservedly in the sphere of religious experience. We proffer no demand for a special method of knowledge. We make use of the method employed in all other spheres. If, therefore, our method is invalid because religious experience is originally derived from subjective impressions, why is not that method equally wanting in reliability? [1]

II

But this general reply will not, by itself, suffice.

[1] It is well known that many philosophical theories base certitude on inward experience; cf. the words of Dr. T. M. Forsyth in his *English Philosophy*: 'Nothing is more characteristic of English philosophy than the insistence, on the part of each of the thinkers in turn, that his system is grounded on *experience.* However they differ from one another, either in their fundamental tenets or in points of detail, they agree that philosophy consists in reflection on, or interpretation of, experience.'

However satisfying to those who enjoy the experiences in question, by others its decisiveness would be strenuously denied. After all, we are reminded, error as well as truth can be widespread, and even though there are many who lay claim to the knowledge of God alleged, there are also many who do not. May not this belief—especially as it is not universal—be due to 'suggestion' in the case of all who profess it, as easily as in the case of each? This challenge, which must clearly be accepted, raises the whole question of the criteria by which an inward experience may be shown to be *valid*—i.e. may be shown not merely to yield us subjective certitude, but also to bring us into actual touch with something objectively true. We cannot logically advance further in our discussion until the problem thus arising has received consideration.

We would suggest four effective tests of the validity of an inward experience:

1. It must be in harmony with reason,[1] and must fit naturally into the general framework of our knowledge. It may, of course, transcend the limits of knowledge which unaided reason has as yet attained, but it may not *contradict* reason.[2]

[1] The isolation of religious from theoretic knowledge defended by such teachers as Ritschl and W. Herrmann cannot be regarded as satisfactory. In our use of the term 'reason' we accept Dr. Inge's contravention of Kant's well-known view: 'There is only one reason, not two; and the "practical reason," when set in opposition to the theoretical, and exalted above it, is after all only another name for the irrational will' (*Faith and its Psychology*, p. 149).

[2] By this requirement we mean to imply that the condition thus laid down must be satisfied by any inward experience which is to justify its claim in other minds than that of the experient himself. We are not advancing the unwarrantable contention that human reason at its present stage of development is the final criterion of what is possible. That which is at variance with reason as at present organized, is not of strict necessity untrue, but it cannot as yet demand to be *accepted* as true.

2. It must accord with man's own inner constitution. All contact with truth will help forward man's self-realization, and every step towards full self-realization implies a nearer approach to the unification of the self. An inward experience, therefore, which claims validity must tend to inward harmony of personality, and help to unify the life.

3. If the experience be of an ethical or religious character, it must, further, be in agreement with the highest moral sense of the race, and action on the assumption of its validity must carry a man further morally than action based on theories less true. Applied universally, it must be such as would secure universal progress.

4. It must be capable of becoming universal. That which is ultimately true can scarcely be accessible only to a limited esoteric circle. Hence an inward experience that would justify its validity to others must be such that each who fulfils the needful conditions shall be able to attain it in all its essential characteristics.

Should any inward experience fail to satisfy these tests, there is a strong balance of probability, if not (as some of us would hold) a reasonable degree of certainty, against its title to validity. If, on the other hand, it complies with these conditions, it must be treated as standing in an entirely different category. In that case, it may fairly be contended, while there is no antecedent improbability in the view that it is valid, the results in which it issues are of such a nature that, for their adequate explanation, they demand the existence of a corresponding objective reality.

III

These criteria we accept, without a single

reservation, in the realm of religious experience. There are many alleged religious experiences which, tried by their standard, are unquestionably found wanting. These we, as well as the unbeliever, disallow—in some cases (as, for example, those of pseudo-mysticism) believing them to be based on self-delusion, in others (as in certain of the emotional experiences) holding them to be genuine, but through their very nature less suited to the purposes of evidence. That the proposed conditions of validity, however, are fulfilled by the *essential* Christian experience a simple appeal to facts is sufficient to establish.

1. As expounded by authoritative teachers, this experience nowhere involves, for its explanation, hypotheses opposed to human reason. If there be a God—and no reputable thinker, though himself rejecting it, would describe the theory as irrational—it is 'reasonable' to suppose that He would reveal Himself to His children, and take such action as would foster, or if need be re-establish, their communion with Him. For proof of this assertion the reader is necessarily referred to other essays of this volume. It falls within the scope of the present paper merely to recognize its relevance for our immediate argument. But while at this place the point does not require discussion, it must not on that account be wholly disregarded. Faith is not inimical to reason. It is only, in Kingsley's fine phrase, 'reason exercised on the invisible.'

2. Our second test demands a more detailed application. The result is instructive and entirely reassuring. For in Christian experience we shall learn to recognize the most powerful unifying influence within man's reach. That this should be the case is made antecedently probable

by the very range of its appeal. There can be no greater error than to suppose, with some, that it is to a partial self that Christian faith is addressed, or, with others, that it is mediated by means of a special faculty. Faith is a normal operation of the human mind, and claims for its sphere the entire domain of personality. Indeed, it is the failure to recognize this fundamental fact that accounts for those very idiosyncrasies of religious life by which the true argument from experience has been so seriously embarrassed. Instead of minimizing the unity of the self, Christian faith can itself be complete only when that unity is jealously safeguarded. It is, and can rightly be nothing less than, the response of the whole man—reason, feeling, and will—to the Divine advances.

But that, while important, is the least part of the present argument. Christian faith not merely respects the inner unity of human personality. *It carries it to fulfilment.* It is in religious experience, and therein alone, that man finds a final answer to the clamant questions raised by his own nature. In his natural condition his inward life is restless and distracted. He is driven in a score of different directions by different motives, impulses, desires. It is here that his innate weakness is revealed. So long as this inward conflict is still waged, his truest self must still remain unrealized. The attainment of *that* self requires an inner harmony of personality. The warring elements must be reduced to order. An inward unity must be achieved. That is precisely the end secured by Christian experience. When life is organized upon its basis the result is peace.

If it be urged in reply that peace is also found by some who group their impulses on other, rival systems, we may accept the statement without

admitting the suggested inference. Life, it is true, may be systematized in the interest of art or of knowledge or of personal ambition, and the subjection of all conflicting motives to one of these ideals could scarcely fail to institute a certain inward unity. But the unity promoted has a wholly different character. If, as the objection presupposes, art or knowledge or ambition be made the single end of life—and otherwise the result would not be harmony—the unity is fostered only by some form of self-mutilation. Concord has been secured—but at a price. If one element in the personality now holds unchallenged sway, it is because other integral elements have previously been sacrificed—among them, to name the most august of all, the spiritual instincts themselves. The unity attained through true religious experience, on the contrary, is a unity won through self-*fulfilment*. No vital element within the self is lost. In this wide field a place may be found for every instinct, sentiment, affection. Even the impulses once hostile to religion are purified and brought into alliance, with every factor in the complex personality conserved. Nor is this all. In ministering to religion, each of these wins far more than mere survival: it gains the truest exercise of its own function. In this high service it finds perfect freedom. The innermost meaning of thought, of interest, of desire, of purpose can never be realized in relation to objects lower than the Highest. It is only as each is directed to the Great Source from which it sprang that the fullest possibilities of mind and heart and will can ever be achieved.

In other words, the more completely life is organized upon the Christian basis, the more surely are the varied aspects of our complex self both

realized and brought to inward unity. The evidential value of this fact is of the highest order. 'The requirement of system, of ordered connexion,' writes a modern psychologist, treating the general problem of belief, 'is the profoundest need of the intellect, and according as this need is met will belief be induced. *Belief determined on such grounds is equivalent to knowledge.*' [1]

3. We turn to the third condition of validity. What is often called the 'pragmatic' test of religious experience has one peculiar merit: it can be applied by 'the man in the street' as easily as by the philosopher. Wherever the experience is found in its pure and essential condition, the ensuing transformation is writ large for all to read. Such stories as those embodied in *Broken Earthenware* and *The Everlasting Mercy* are not exceptional. They could be paralleled from the memory of thousands of church-workers, in Christian and non-Christian lands alike. Response to Christ's appeal brings men salvation here and now. Confronted by His ideal, their souls are deeply troubled by their own unworthiness and impotence. They recognize, with bitter mourning, how far they fall short by nature of the standard required of them: they have learnt, through sad experience, their powerlessness to help themselves. No hope is seen save in the abandonment of the old centre of personality, a centre of selfishness and sin, and the transference of the will to a new centre, Christ within the soul. This transference once effected, however, a veritable regeneration of their life ensues. They experience a sense of rightness, of renewal, of blessedness. Trust in Christ yields to the will a new moral power. That

[1] Alexander Mair: article 'Belief,' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. ii. p. 461.

which, before, they could not do, now becomes possible. Heights hitherto beyond their reach are now accessible. In countless lives the gospel message has thus been verified by actual experiment, from the days of the apostles right up to the present generation. Nor is the experience confined to instances of sudden transformation. In lives wherein the moral progress has appeared more gradual, the changes wrought, if less dramatic, have not been less revolutionary. Christianity *works* in practice. It raises men to higher planes of conduct than, without its aid, they ever could attain. It is no adequate contravention of this general plea to point to some in our midst who, rejecting the Christian creed, have yet displayed exalted moral rectitude. For, while these have been men of more than average character, the power of Christ transforms the most debased. Moreover, for their loftiest moral vision, they too are debtors to the words of Christ, and to the Christian atmosphere in which they live. And even they themselves, high though their present standard be, would reach a moral level yet more eminent, strengthened by conscious fellowship with Jesus Christ.[1]

Nor is the argument restricted to the lives of individuals. It may be applied with equal cogency to the destinies of nations. The almost immeasurable progress gained through Christianity forms, as is known, one of the best-attested facts of human history. But it is more than the general circumstance that here demands attention. From our present standpoint, other and more particular

[1] The argument, it is perhaps well to emphasize, is not, of course, that any Christian is necessarily a better man morally than the finest unbeliever, but that each man is, through a genuine Christian experience, lifted to a higher moral plane than he himself could otherwise attain.

facts acquire a large significance. For example: it is only those peoples who have adopted a living form of Christianity, by whom—otherwise than indirectly—the vast moral growth in evidence has ever been attained. More than that, it is precisely among those nations who have accepted Christianity the most fully that the progress achieved has proved the most remarkable. Even that is not all. Within the history of a single Christian race, the degree to which this progress has been gained varies with that in which the Christian faith has issued in a living Christian experience. What thoughtful student can ignore the change from the moral growth of early Christian Italy to the moral degeneration of her later years? Place side by side standards of English life immediately before, and immediately after, the Evangelical Revival, and who can mistake the lesson of the contrast? There is no adequate reply in the familiar contention that centuries of Christian influence have left us many wrongs still unredressed. For it is precisely because, in lands nominally Christian, Christian principles have been but partially applied that such a charge can even be advanced. It is not to action *in accordance with* these principles that the survival of social injustice has been due: on the contrary, it is to action in which these principles have been flagrantly *transgressed*.[1] Thus the apparent exceptions, so far from weakening, only serve to strengthen the main conclusion. The verdict of history is that in the community, as in the individual, where Christian experience is

[1] Cf. the words of Dr. W. T. Davison: 'As yet we have not been able to see what "Christianity" fully means. He was right who, in answer to the question, Is the Christian religion "played out"? replied, It has not yet been tried' (*The Indwelling Spirit*, p. 230).

a reality that dominates the life, moral progress is assured; where it is either non-existent or a fiction, moral progress is arrested. These are facts which, on any theory of life, demand an explanation.

An explanation is offered to us. The ideas resulting in such signal progress, we are asked to believe, have been initiated solely from within the mind of man. This general assertion, to which the main part of our argument is being directed, demands at this point a more particular attention. The thoughts that originate moral advance are due, it is urged, to auto-suggestion: there is no need to assume an objective Source; the human mind whispers them to itself. But what is this 'self' that 'suggests' them? If it be the self-as-inspired-by-Christ, we agree: for no Christian denies that it is from within our own personality that Christ directs us. But that this is not the 'self' intended is all too manifest, since such an admission would at once allow our whole contention. It must be the 'natural self,' therefore, that is viewed as framing these effectual ideas. In such a theory there appear to be insuperable difficulties. For, in the first place, the results are of too fine a quality to be derived from any source so mean. Could the moral and spiritual spring from the carnal or the psychical? And, in the second place, the ideas in question are directly *opposed* to the interests of the 'natural' self. Their firm demand is for action which it abhors, and, should it refuse obedience, they will rise up and *condemn* it. Could a 'self' originate that which is contrary to its own nature? No refuge from this reasoning can be found by retreating from the 'individual' to the 'common' human mind. For if it be urged that the moral and

spiritual ideas found in some individual Christian's mind have merely been suggested by the words and deeds of others, we inquire, From what source, then, did *they* derive them? 'We do not solve a problem,' as Professor Gwatkin has reminded us, 'by the easy method of adjourning it to infinity.'[1] The psychological explanation, indeed, is no explanation at all. Psychology merely observes and analyses mental processes: it gives no ultimate explanation of their origin. And it is the *origin* of the moral and religious experiences in question that constitutes our present problem. Our power to describe the working of a force does not account for its existence. Now, it is the *existence* of the force producing moral progress that no theory of auto-suggestion can elucidate. The point is that moral work is actually accomplished, and accomplished through belief in Christ's presence and help as under no other conditions whatsoever. Can moral work be achieved by a delusion? You cannot do work by *imagining* a force: *the force must exist.* And the force must be of such a nature as to account for the result. 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' If this moral progress be the work of a spiritual Power, we have a Cause adequate to the effect. If it be the fruit of delusion, the world's highest good has issued from its deepest error, and the life of the universe would seem to be constructed on completely irrational lines.

4. The last test laid down for the validity of an inward experience was that it must be capable of becoming universal. On first thoughts, the religious experiences under consideration scarcely seem to satisfy this condition. We do not refer, of course, to the obvious fact that all men are not

[1] *The Knowledge of God*, vol. i. p. 17.

in present enjoyment of them. For that fact, though true, is beside the mark. The demand is not that all shall actually possess such experiences, but that to those *who fulfil the needful conditions* their attainment shall be possible. We do not question the validity of our sense-perception because a blind man can see nothing, or a man born colour-blind has sight-sensations different from our own. Just as little is the validity of spiritual experiences affected when the failure to gain them is due to neglect of the conditions necessary to their attainment. It is not in such cases that the difficulty resides. The difficulty, rather, is here —that, when some men have actually met the required conditions, certain of these experiences appear to lie still hopelessly beyond their reach. The more intense emotion, for example, associated with the sense of sin, the exultant joy aroused by knowledge of forgiveness, the clearer consciousness of God's reality and the more vivid emotional realization of His presence—these do not seem to be equally accessible to all. Not seldom men whose quest has been transparently sincere have sought them with but little positive result. Does not this leave the last criterion unsatisfied, and, as a necessary consequence, rob spiritual experience as a whole of all its high pretensions to validity?

The point is an important one, and will probably affect our final statement of the argument from experience. But the argument itself is left essentially unimpaired. Its main contention—at least as urged by its more competent exponents —has never been intended to imply that religious experience is strictly uniform. No *personal* experience ever is. Strict uniformity (if it be found at all) belongs to the sphere of material

existence. Wherever personality has become a factor in the case it is the rule to find a general uniformity *side by side with individual variations*. Thus, for example, in Ethics and Aesthetics there are admittedly individual differences in the results attained, as contrasted with the uniformity expected in the realm of Physics or Mechanics. Now, religious experience is indisputably *personal*. While, therefore, the essential experience will be alike for all, the precise manner of its apprehension will vary with the constitution of each separate personality. Temperamental differences not only may, but must, be taken into account. In the case of one man the emotional effects will be very slight, in the case of another they will be very powerful; and there lies an almost infinite gradation of degrees between the two. It follows that, for the purposes of evidence offered to others, stress should be laid, not upon those elements in the experience which mark individual variations, but upon those which constitute the essential and uniform factor. In other words, in using the argument from experience we probably have no right to emphasize its emotional aspects. We do not by a single jot renounce our faith in their reality.[1] As evidence to ourselves they well may exercise commanding influence. But as evidence offered to others they are bound to prove less impressive, since the capacity of each man to attain them is inevitably dependent upon temperamental conditions. When it is on the proved reality of our own experience that we base our plea for other men's belief in its validity, the experience in ques-

[1] For a striking defence of religious emotion from the pen of a distinguished living philosopher, see Professor Caldecott's essay, 'The Emotional Element in Religion' (*London Theological Studies*, p. 313).

tion must surely be such that every man may find it for himself. Otherwise, he is entirely unable to apply the criterion proposed. For this reason it is upon the ethical rather than upon the emotional aspects of religious experience that our argument must primarily rest. And there it can rest securely. For the main outline of evangelical experience—the change in the direction of the will, the exercise of faith in the power of Christ, the resulting transformation of both mind and heart, and the consequent moral progress, steadily advancing towards the fullest self-realization—this, without doubt, is possible to *all*. To those who adopt and maintain the religious attitude we cannot guarantee enjoyment of particular emotions. But we *can*, with absolute assurance, promise them new life in Christ—the *essential* Christian experience. And so long as this testimony shall hold good—and nineteen centuries of history have left it without serious challenge—essential Christian experience completely satisfies the fourth criterion of validity. It is proved capable of becoming universal.

The argument is greatly strengthened at this point by two further considerations, which we must be content to state rather than seek to develop. The first of these is the stupendous growth of Christianity. Notwithstanding superficial appearances, its progress still continues unarrested. Indeed, in the judgement of an eminent historian, the advance of Christianity in our own time 'is even more impressive and suggestive of living power than the conversion of the Roman Empire.' [1] The significance of this unceasing growth may not be lightly set aside. To assign it to the Christ's alluring promises is to betray

[1] H. M. Gwatkin, *Early Church History*, vol. i. p. 3.

sheer ignorance of the facts. For Christianity, along with bright assurances, brings to men's lives unparalleled demands for sacrifice, and *the more stringent the self-sacrifice exacted, the wider is the progress it achieves!* These facts are made intelligible only on one assumption: the faith must satisfy some *universal* element in human nature. Gamaliel's famous and far-seeing argument stands to this day, awaiting its reply.

We shall find a second relevant consideration in the almost infinite variety of men by whom this great experience is attested. Those who bear witness to it as a fact of their immediate consciousness are not limited to one type or age or nation. This is equally averred by young and old, rich and poor, male and female, clever and unlearned. It has been confessed by the savage along with the man of cultivated mind, and by those who once were hostile to its claim with those who had been trained for its acceptance. In every generation since the days of Christ, and—an even weightier circumstance—among men of every psychological temperament, its earnest and unfaltering witnesses are numbered. At first an Eastern faith, Christianity has brought to hearts and minds in the West so full a satisfaction that only with effort is its distant origin recalled. And now, carried once more into Eastern climes, it is proving to men of other race and outlook than our own its equal power to meet their uttermost want. Here, too, are facts that call for explanation. And, as before, no adequate solution is forthcoming save that Christ answers to a *universal* need.

IV

The essential Christian experience is thus seen to satisfy all four conditions of a valid inward

experience: (1) it is in harmony with reason; (2) it accords with man's inner constitution; (3) it is in agreement with the highest moral sense of the race; (4) it is capable of becoming universal. We have shown that, wherever it operates, there are regularly produced—both in the life of the individual and in the universe of other selves external to him—*constructive* effects making progressively for man's true self-realization. Examples of this are neither few nor uncertain; they are innumerable and *constant*. No single instance could be named in which—in proportion as the experience was genuine—the result described has failed to supervene. All this cries out aloud for explanation. And it can be adequately explained only on the theory that there exists an Objective Reality to which the experience in question corresponds, and from which its unique and manifest potency is drawn. To say that the facts are 'explained' by auto-suggestion is to juggle with words. An arbitrary assertion which overlooks half of the relevant facts constitutes no 'explanation' at all. The theory cannot account for all the facts that constitute the subjective experience itself; and, even if it could, those that transcend the purely subjective realm would still be left entirely uninterpreted. Christian experience consistently satisfies objective tests. It therefore imparts more than a subjective certitude: it implies that its possessor is in touch with a Reality that is objectively true. Should any one protest that the proof falls short of demonstration, we reply that the evidence advanced furnishes *the only kind of proof which the nature of the problem allows*; and that, if its cogency is denied in the case under consideration, it must equally be denied in the case of all other forms

of experience—not least in that of consciousness itself.

The general conclusion thus attained is strongly reinforced by yet another circumstance. In the case of Christianity, *the inward experience answers to an objective revelation.* The argument of the present essay is not intended to imply that the Christian certainty rests upon inward experience alone. Strong as we hold this evidence to be, it forms but part of a greater whole, and its full strength can be gauged only when it is studied in its larger setting. Our immediate argument, in other words, is essentially connected with that of the companion essays published in this volume. The Christian experience is based upon a firm historical foundation. Its birth is not indefinite and unknown. It has its origin in certain objective facts of history, and of those facts it is a continuation at once natural and true to type. Thus the historical revelation and the inward experience confirm one another. A revelation of the kind alleged would be unintelligible unless it called forth a continuous experience of this character. An experience of this character would be unintelligible unless it arose from a revelation of the kind alleged. Each answers to the other as a key to its own lock.

V

It is on such grounds as these that we may base our faith in the objective truth of Christian experience. But a final difficulty remains. Would not the line of argument pursued sanction the higher non-Christian, equally with the Christian, religions? Before this pertinent inquiry can be answered a distinction of no slight im-

portance must be recognized. There are certain features which non-Christian religions unquestionably share with Christianity, as, for example, belief in the existence of a Higher Power, and faith in the possibility of communion with His Spirit. In proportion as these satisfy the tests laid down above, we accept them as valid *so far as they go*. To do so, indeed, is only to adopt the original Christian attitude. 'The Light which lighteth every man' has shone in every age; and though God 'suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways,' yet 'He left not Himself without witness,' in any generation. In regard, however, to the features which *distinguish* those faiths from Christianity, no such substantiation is forthcoming. To these our line of argument brings not the slightest sanction.

But, waiving this true and relevant distinction, let us view each of these religions as a whole. Not one attains our standard of validity. Few, if indeed any, of them, for example, reveal a capacity for exercising a universal power of attraction. Their inherent appeal is, broadly speaking, limited to men trained in their own peculiar atmosphere. Even if we allow an exception in the case of Buddhism (and, until Buddhism has shown itself able to meet the deepest needs of the West, this single exception might be fairly controverted) there remain other criteria which all the non-Christian religions alike are unable to satisfy. For, despite their points of value, they wholly fail to promote a complete unification of the self. Such harmony of life as they secure is gained by sacrifice within the personality. Again, they do not yield, either in the individual or in the community, a loftier moral life than would by any other means have been attainable. On the con-

trary, in certain respects their ethical teaching, and the results in which it issues, are a positive outrage upon man's highest moral sense. The non-Christian religions, therefore, fail to comply with all the tests of validity laid down; while even their relative success must be attributed, not to the features which mark them off from Christianity, but to those which are shared by it and them in common. We have only to add that no one of these faiths can associate with its origin facts of history so profoundly significant as the Personality and life of Jesus Christ—objective facts of immeasurable importance from the standpoint of evidence—and we may claim to have shown that, for the purpose of our present argument, the difference between Christianity and them is not merely one of degree but no less manifestly one of kind.

Our line of argument, in other words, sets Christianity in a category by itself. The considerations advanced have furnished cause for believing that, in a sense not true of any other faith, it implies, and for its adequate explanation requires, the existence of an External Reality. If we be asked on what ground this Reality is identified with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we reply—first, that only through faith in their identity are the full results described ever achieved. Let an unknown quantity *x*, or even an unknown Person 'God,' be substituted for Christ in the presentation of the object of belief, and the proposed effects are not, with any degree of completeness, forthcoming. Secondly, the argument from history is at this point peculiarly impressive. The results in question were foretold by Christ, as destined to flow from a new life that He Himself was mediating for mankind. Though

they were unprecedented in previous centuries, and, apart from faith in Him, have since remained unparalleled, they began to appear (just as He said they would) shortly after His own resurrection, and (again, just as He said) have consistently followed upon true faith in Him, up to and including the present generation. Can this be mere coincidence? We thus advance two objective facts the evidential significance of which no unbiased thinker has a right to disregard. And upon two such facts we may confidently base our claim that, if Christianity is to be adequately explained, it requires the existence not merely of an External Reality, but of *such an External Reality as Christianity itself has postulated.*

VI

Let us briefly summarize our results. We start on common ground with our critics—we maintaining, and they admitting, the reality of our religious experiences viewed as psychological processes. On the basis of these experiences we ourselves claim that we know God in Jesus Christ. Our critics point out that this knowledge is subjective. We reply that *all* knowledge is subjective, and that, the method of knowledge we employ being the accepted method for all knowledge, it is no less reliable in the spiritual than in any other sphere. Against this plea the critics bring a second proposition. Since the alleged knowledge is far from universal, it may, even though on a very wide scale, be due in every case to 'suggestion,' inwardly initiated. The strength of this contention can be gauged only by laying down a standard of validity. The criteria must be determined by means of which

an experience of any kind, while itself necessarily inward, may yet be held to imply the existence of a corresponding external reality. These criteria, we proceed to show, Christian experience satisfies in a remarkable degree. From the charge of pure subjectivism, moreover, it is further rescued both by certain objective facts which our examination of the criteria has disclosed, and—a point of capital importance—by its answering with precision to an objective historical revelation. But, continues the critic, would not the experience yielded by non-Christian faiths find equal vindication in the argument pursued? This question we answer with an unhesitating negative. For the experience afforded by non-Christian religions does *not* satisfy the necessary criteria. Even in the very limited degree in which it appears to do so, it succeeds only in virtue of that which it holds in common with Christianity—a fact which it would be strangely illogical to plead in its exclusive interest to the *detriment* of Christianity! In satisfying the needful criteria of validity, therefore, Christian experience stands alone. Even then, we are asked in conclusion, though the experience itself were valid, is it not pure assumption to perceive in Christ its sole efficient cause? The accuracy of the association, we reply, is verified by two conspicuous facts: first, only through faith in Christ is the full experience ever found to be realized; and, secondly, it is with His Person that, alike by its origin and by its history, it stands inseparably connected.

The evidence of Christian experience, thus firmly established, yields to those who possess it a refuge of tranquil certainty, from which to view with untroubled mind the eager contest of

opinions round them. The most searching inquiry into the records on which their experience rests should inspire in their minds neither grief nor alarm. In their first contact with the demand for such a scrutiny, it is true, a certain sense of shock and keen anxiety is most natural. No man should even think of this solicitude save with the utmost sympathy and tenderness. So soon, however, as the first bewilderment has passed, may it not, after all, be recognized as needless? For if, as we have seen reason to maintain, our personal experience of Christ is genuine, we have this independent ground of assurance to sustain us under the most exacting process of investigation. Even the wild subjectivism by which the name of 'critic' has been so discredited, should leave our inward confidence still tranquil and unshaken. 'Criticism' of this type, it is true, is simply deplorable, being often as wanting in reverence as it is void of judicial discernment. But yet, when the worst is said, it does not call for *fear*. If we believe that we have found the truth and that truth is stronger than error, we may possess our souls in patience, admitting no faithless doubts as to the ultimate issue. Entirely different from these wild vagaries is the cautious study which, for the sake of truth itself, explores the origins of all our sacred writings. This least of all have we the right to dread—and for three simple reasons:

1. If, as we hold, our knowledge of Christ is authentic, such studies could not possibly end by subverting it. We have found for ourselves that Christ is 'the Truth.' It follows that all new discoveries of truth will, in the ultimate issue, establish His claims the more surely. There may, indeed, be an interval in which the clearer faith of

some is overshadowed—a painful consequence inseparable from a period of transition. Yet, once persuaded that our own experience is valid, we cannot grant to that result more than a temporary significance. To be afraid of free investigation would be to adopt an essentially sceptical attitude, and to admit a doubt that Christ and Truth might, after all, be found in mutual opposition. Of this those who know Christ in their own experience will have no fear. The utmost, therefore, that this scrutiny could finally achieve would be to change, not the Christian experience itself, but—a very different thing—some particular interpretation of it. That, if at any point it should be needful, would be a positive gain. For, while religious truth will always transcend our reason, it may never contradict it. Faith, as we have seen, must be the faith of the entire personality—of reason no less than of feeling and of will. Should, then, alleged new knowledge challenge faith, it positively *must* be scrutinized, or faith no longer would remain inviolate. If by the scrutiny new knowledge be established, not the less plainly it must be assimilated, for loyalty to Christ and disloyalty to truth are irreconcilable principles. But just as to palter with our intellectual conscience would be to undermine our religious experience, so to be faithful to the one is only to purify and deepen the other; every resultant change implying, not that our essential experience had been untrue, but only that our theory of it had been thus far incomplete.

2. But we need not write of what 'would be' the results: we may appeal to those which have actually occurred. Yet once again history is beginning to repeat itself. One great enlargement of our knowledge after another—the work

of Galileo, of the nineteenth-century scientists, most of all, perhaps, of Charles Darwin — has been hailed in its turn as destructive of the Christian faith: in the actual result, each has but deepened and enriched our knowledge of the God whom Christ revealed. We can already begin to see that in the case of Biblical Criticism also, the wild extremists notwithstanding, the final issue will but prove the same. We might reasonably point to thousands of earnest disciples —and surely their testimony should count for something— whose faith (and therefore whose experience) has, through its agency, been strongly reinforced. But theirs is not our only type of evidence. Accept as witness—and could any be less biased?—a distinguished scientist, writing on this vexed subject *from the standpoint of 'pure agnosticism'*: 'The outcome,' he declares, 'is, impartially considered, a signal victory for Christianity. Prior to the new [biblical] science, there was really no rational basis in thoughtful minds, either for the date of any one of the New Testament books, or, consequently, for the historical truth of any one of the events narrated in them. . . . But now all this kind of scepticism has been rendered obsolete, and for ever impossible. . . . An enormous gain has thus accrued to the objective evidences of Christianity.'[1] Need those who know Christ *really* fear research which, on the testimony of a highly trained expert in evidence, has plainly issued in results like these? So far from undermining our experience, these studies do but show the more completely how strong and sure are its historical foundations.

3. The evangelical appeal of Christianity has, in its turn, proved not the less immune. There

[1] Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, pp. 155–6.

appears to be a widespread impression that the acknowledgement of critical methods is in some way inimical to the gospel's central message. Natural as this idea may seem to some, they will in simple fairness admit that the question must be settled, not by antecedent theory, but by the witness of the actual facts. And, with no uncertain voice, the facts declare the inference mistaken. The results of sober criticism not merely leave unshaken our faith in the Saviourhood of Christ: they give it back to us more firmly established. Among the most ardent evangelists of to-day are numbered those by whom these same results are resolutely welcomed. And, tendered through their lips, the appeal of Christ lacks none of its ancient power. As in our fathers' days, men are convinced of sin, converted to God, and filled with the fruits of the Spirit. The point must be put briefly, yet with the utmost strength and emphasis. Through these men's word the Cross is winning triumphs fully as wonderful as in the years of old.

The Christian has nothing to fear from the most stringent examination of his sacred records. In his own experience he discovers Christ to be the Truth. Henceforth he is triumphantly secure. If for a while inquiry leads to error, no error can prevail against the Truth. If the inquiry issues in fresh knowledge, experience is but viewed in clearer light. Thereby the old experience is made richer, and, in the process, it has suffered loss neither within its own essential nature nor in the potency of its divine appeal.

XI

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE TENDENCIES OF PRESENT-DAY THOUGHT

H. Maldwyn Hughes, B.A., D.D.

The Christian Faith is grounded in revelation. How far is it incumbent upon it to come to terms with modern thought? The answer which we give to the question will depend upon our conception of the method of Divine Revelation, and of the relation in which knowledge of Christian truth stands to other kinds of knowledge. If revelation is conceived of as having operated purely externally, and if revealed truth is regarded as fixed and static both in content and in verbal expression, as handed down in the Scriptures or in the Creeds of the Church, then Christianity is a self-contained system, and can hold no parley with modern or any other science and philosophy. If they at any point conflict with the Christian Faith, then so much the worse for them. But if revelation be conceived of as operating not merely externally, but inwardly by the energizing of the indwelling Spirit of God in reason and heart and conscience, and if external events (such as the facts of the gospel history) be accepted as revelation, not at the mere dictate of authority, but because their deep import and significance are brought home to us by the Spirit of Truth, then it is recognized

that revelation, however transcendent its source, makes use of the ordinary channels of knowledge, and of the ordinary categories of thought, and is thus not to be viewed in isolation from other kinds of knowledge. Since truth is known to be truth because of the response which it awakens in mind and heart and conscience, all truth is one, and if we could only attain to a full and clear vision of it we should see that it harmonizes in all its parts.

This is not to say that truth has not many aspects, and therefore many forms of expression. Our impression of the shape of a mountain will vary according to the angle from which we view it; and it is so with truth. Moreover, the territory of truth is so wide that most of us can investigate only one small part of it. Concentration of view is apt to produce narrowness of horizon, and many of our misunderstandings arise from the fact that we frequently mistake the part for the whole. The scientist, the philosopher, and the theologian are all accredited investigators in the realms of truth; but they differ in the immediate object of their search, and they work with different instruments. No one of them can claim to impose his dogmas on the others. Christian Faith is bound to take account of the well-attested discoveries of science and philosophy; but it claims that it is for the theologian, and not for the scientist or philosopher *as such*, to show the bearing of these discoveries upon the truths and forms of expression of revealed religion.

The natural sciences, such as geology, biology, chemistry, and physics, are simply concerned with the observation and classification of facts and phenomena, with experiment and generalization. Their method is that of induction, and ultimate

problems do not properly enter within their province. They may lead up to ultimate problems, but they cannot attempt a solution without passing the limits of their own sphere. The biologist, for instance, becomes a philosopher when, not content with investigating the phenomena of life, he passes on to discuss its origin. So also does the physicist when he discourses of the relation of mind and matter. The scientist has, of course, a perfect right to turn philosopher; but it is rarely that he has the requisite philosophic training and equipment.

Philosophy aims at taking a comprehensive survey of experience, with a view to unifying knowledge in all its parts and setting forth truth as a whole. But, unfortunately, the expectation to which it gives rise is only partially fulfilled. As a rule it takes too limited a view of experience, and, because the instrument with which it usually works is the logical and speculative reason, it generally fails to do justice to the emotional and intuitive experiences of religion. Religion relies on faith as well as reason; indeed, it believes that faith carries it further than reason. But this is not to reduce religion to mere subjective feeling. For, in the first place, 'Faith submits to reason the assurance she has gained as to the things of God. Reason reviews, harmonizes, gives expression to the realities of faith.' [1] And, in the second place, religion contends that its authentic and verified intuitions and experiences have an objective reality as genuine as any other elements in experience.

Bearing in mind these differences of subject-matter, of aim, and of method, we proceed to a brief review of the bearing upon the Christian

[1] Dr. Chase, quoted by Inge, *Faith and its Psychology*, p. 241.

Faith of the present-day tendencies of science and philosophy.

I

Limits of space necessitate that we restrict ourselves to central themes, and it will be convenient to take the doctrine of *Evolution* as the starting-point of our discussion. The theory is, of course, very old, but it was not until Darwin and Wallace that it was freely circulated as current coin in the realm of thought. The fact of Evolution (of the progressive development of the world, and of the inter-relation of species) is outside the range of controversy. There are marked differences of opinion among scientists, but these relate to the factors which determine the evolutionary process, rather than to the process itself. There is no need to recall the controversies between theology and science which marked the years following the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. To-day it is generally recognized that Evolution throws no light upon ultimate origins, but is simply the creative *method* of God.

Christian Faith is bound to accept without reserve the verified discoveries of science. We cannot in the name of Supernatural Revelation deny the truth of the revelation of the divine ways in nature. God's revelations do not contradict, but supplement each other. We may not be able to put the broken arcs of our knowledge together to form a perfect circle, but that is because, under the conditions of our partial knowledge, some of the arcs are missing. But the obligation which rests on Christian Faith to accept the authenticated facts of science does not extend to an acceptance of the scientific interpretation of their bearing

upon the truths of religion. The religious man must face the new situation for himself, and must examine anew his beliefs in the light of the new knowledge. If he has held certain theories as to the plenary inspiration of the Bible, he must ask himself whether his spiritual life suffers any real loss if it be found that the purpose of the inspiration is the progressive revelation of God, and not instruction in science and in history. The question has only to be asked, and it provides its own answer. Life is a discipline and a quest. One of man's tasks is the subjugation of nature. Knowledge of its secrets is not given by supernatural revelation or endowment, but is won by patient quest. When it is remembered that man is a free moral personality, it implies a higher, not a lower, view of revelation to conceive of God as causing His light to shine in men's hearts even in the lowest stages of their intellectual development, and side by side with, or rather within, the process of their struggle for a fuller knowledge in every sphere, giving them a gradual and ever-widening revelation of Himself.

The theory of Evolution compels us to surrender the literal interpretation of the opening chapters of Genesis. The question we have to face is not what is the bearing of this upon certain preconceived theories of inspiration, but, How do these narratives, if not interpreted literally, harmonize with the facts of the spiritual life? Particular theories of inspiration must yield to facts which confute them, but the facts of the spiritual life have as valid an authentication as those of science. If the light which Evolution throws upon the opening chapters of Genesis forbids a literal interpretation of the story of the Fall, a little reflection will show that the essential

truths therein embodied, and which were thrown into theological form by the Apostle Paul, remain unshaken. The facts which lie behind the doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin are these:

(1) That a real choice between good and evil was necessary if man was to develop as a free moral personality. (2) That sin is a malign force alien to the Divine purpose—a force through which men in all ages have fallen short of the glory of God. (3) That sinful tendencies are transmitted from generation to generation, and that no man is exempt from the baleful heritage. (4) That the race is an organism, all the members of which suffer or rejoice together, so that we have a vital concern in the sins of others as well as our own. These are facts which are borne out by daily observation and experience. Science, so far from confuting, confirms them. What is vital to Christian theology is not any particular theory of the historical origin of sin, but the reality and universality of the fact of sin. The discoveries of science leave unshaken the basal presupposition of the gospel—that ours is a sinful race in need of redemption.

But the acceptance of the theory of Evolution raises an even more fundamental question: Can the theistic view of the universe be maintained? If for an act of creation we substitute a process of development by the operation of various factors from within, do we not rule out the thought of a Creator, and accept a mechanical interpretation of the world? This line of argument has been brought home to the popular mind by recent discussions as to the origin of life. It is contended that there is no real gulf between the organic and the inorganic, but that the former has gradually evolved out of the latter.[1] From this hypo-

[1] See Schäfer, *Life: Its Nature, Origin, and Maintenance.*

thesis the deduction is drawn [1] that the universe can be explained in purely material terms. But before such a conclusion is admitted certain considerations must be borne in mind. In the first place, science has not yet succeeded in producing a living cell out of non-living matter,[2] though most biologists believe that this will ultimately be achieved. Secondly, if science is successful in its quest, it will not have created or explained life, but will simply have produced the conditions under which life manifests itself. It will have created, not life, but a suitable vehicle for life. And thirdly, it is one thing to produce organic matter, but quite another to produce an organism. It is a far cry from the evolution of a living cell to the emergence of consciousness, conscience, imagination, and the sense of beauty: 'The life of intelligence, idealism, imagination would have none the less its psychological independence were the chemical formulae of every brain metabolism published to-morrow.' [3]

Perhaps the sphere in which the theory of Evolution has wrought most disturbance has been that of the 'Proofs' of the existence of God. How can the 'Argument from Design,' for instance, hold its ground in face of the demonstration of Natural Selection as a factor in Evolution? It must be admitted that Paley's famous watch illustration is no longer to the point. The universe cannot be conceived of as a mechanism, created like a watch, with every part deliberately

[1] It is fair to state that Prof. Schäfer did not himself proceed to this deduction.

[2] 'Science, in chagrin, has to confess that hitherto in this direction it has failed. It has not yet witnessed the origin of the smallest trace of life from dead matter: all life, so far as has been watched, proceeds from antecedent life' (Lodge, *Man and the Universe*, p. 19).

[3] Thomson and Geddes, *Evolution*, p. 231.

designed for a special purpose, and adjusted to the whole. But even so the teleological argument only changes its form. From initial teleology we are driven to the thought of immanent teleology—the realization of a purpose that both fulfils itself in and directs the evolutionary process. At this point Bergson's conception of *Creative Evolution* comes to our aid. According to Bergson, life is unceasing creation. The main secret of the variations of which the evolutionary process is the outcome is in the *élan vital,* the life-force itself, which is ever producing new forms and branching out in new directions. 'Life is like a current passing from germ to germ, through the medium of a developed organism. It is as if the organism were itself only an excrescence, a bud caused to sprout by the former germ endeavouring to continue itself in a new germ. The essential thing is the *continuous progress* indefinitely pursued, an invisible progress on which each visible organism rides during the short interval of time given it to live.' [1] 'The bifurcations have been numerous, but there have been many blind alleys, besides the two or three highways; and of these highways themselves only one, that which leads through the vertebrates up to man, has been wide enough to allow free passage to the full breadth of life.' [2] Bergson uses the term Evolution 'for what should be known as epigenesis, the continuous creation of what is essentially new. The Bergsonian illustration for this process would be the creation of a melody out of notes, of a poem out of words, of a picture out of colours, all of which constituents are there already taken in isolation, but become a new whole by creative synthesis.' [3]

[1] *Creative Evolution,* p. 28. [2] Ibid. p. 105.
[3] E. Hermann, *Eucken and Bergson,* p. 154.

It is not a long step from Bergson's conception of Creative Evolution to the Pauline teaching: 'He Himself giveth to all life and breath and all things'; 'In Him we live and move and have our being.' Bergson has not yet developed the religious implications of his philosophy, but it is open to the Christian to interpret the *élan vital* as the activity of the immanent and creative Spirit of God, through whose operations the Divine purposes toward the universe are being fulfilled. It is true that Bergson, while repudiating mechanism, rejects teleology [1] in so far as it implies 'an anticipation of the future,' and accepts it only as 'a particular mode of viewing the past in the light of the present'; but the conceptions of Creative Evolution and immanent teleology are in no wise incompatible. Only, if we are to avoid a determinist view of the universe, the purpose that lies behind the evolutionary process must leave room for a real power of choice, 'for possibilities that are not necessities.' 'Existence is like the output from a loom. The pattern, the design for the weaving, is in some sort there already; but, whereas our looms are mere machines, once the guiding cards have been fed into them, the Loom of Time is complicated by a multitude of free agents who can modify the web, making the product more beautiful or more ugly according as they are in harmony or disharmony with the general scheme. I venture to maintain that manifest imperfections are thus accounted for, and that *freedom* could be given on no other terms, nor at any less cost.' [2]

[1] See *Creative Evolution*, pp. 41–55. For a criticism of Bergson from this standpoint see A. J. Balfour in *Hibbert Journal*, October 1911, and Boyce Gibson in *The Quest*, January 1911.

[2] Lodge, *Continuity*, p. 86.

II

Not the least important result of the Darwinian revolution has been the interpretation of intellectual, moral, and religious ideas in the light of the evolutionary principle. It is held that the laws of growth in the moral and spiritual universe are identical with those that operate in the material universe. That this idea has been fruitful of valuable results is beyond question, but it needs to be developed and applied with caution. To assert the absolute identity of natural and spiritual laws is to fall into the snare of what has been called 'biological religion.' In the natural world we have to do with the operation of physical forces in accordance with unchanging laws; in the spiritual world we are concerned with the communion of free spirits with the Father of Spirits. If this *caveat* be borne in mind, we may safely look for parallels between natural and spiritual laws. This many-sided universe is one in all its aspects, and the same principles may operate throughout, though they may be applied in different ways in different spheres.

The carrying over of the evolutionary theory into the sphere of ideas has had two important results. In the first place, it has generated a mistaken optimism as to the moral and social progress of the race. The value of the Christian revelation is depreciated, and the future well-being and progress of the race, it is held, may safely be left to the evolutionary process. In brief, it is assumed that Evolution is a permanent guarantee of progress. But such an assumption reveals a failure to face the facts of even the natural world. Natural history tells of 'blind alleys,' of advancing

life that has proceeded so far and no farther ; and degeneration and reversion to type are all too common. And when we turn from nature to man, the evidence is all against the contention that social progress can safely be left to the unaided care of evolutionary forces. History is full of the records of the failures of Evolution. Nation after nation has advanced so far and has then fallen back, unable to combat the sin which held it in thrall. If there is one thing more than another that ought to be safe in the keeping of Evolution it is the maintenance of the species ; but the Western nations are to-day drawing perilously near the way towards race-suicide. 'There is no reason to hold that Evolution, still less that Darwinism, guarantees progress in all the past and all the future. What undermines the persistence of the species destroys everything. Unfruitful indulgence of passion, under whatever conditions, signifies decadence, decay, death. This is no brute inheritance. Environment may have extinguished innumerable species ; perversion of instinct may be known in the animal world ; but self-extinction by abuse of natural desire is a characteristic human development.'[1] The threatening tendency can only be combated by an appeal to sanctions which Evolution does not yield—the sanctions of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, it is held that moral and religious ideas can be fully explained as the product of social evolution: 'They derive their authority solely from their proved utility'; 'They have their origin as the outcome of social needs, increasing their force and securing their permanence because of their adjustment to altered ideas and

[1] Mackintosh, *Christianity and Sin*, p. 145.

requirements.'[1] Revelation and Inspiration are ruled out of court. Advancing ideas of God and Duty are said to have grown naturally out of those that preceded them, the determining factor in the development being social utility. That there is often a connexion between the higher and lower forms of morality and religion is beyond dispute. But that the one has invariably grown out of the other is far from being the case. 'Animals are not vegetables carried to a rather higher stage of evolution, any more than vegetables are animals which have relapsed to a lower stage. If, then, we are to apply the theory of Evolution to spiritual life as well as to bodily life we must apply it in the same way. We must regard the various forms, in the one case as in the other, as following different lines and tending in different directions from a common centre, rather than as different and successive sections of one and the same line. Spell no more becomes prayer than vegetables become animals.'[2] 'Fetishism, polytheism, and monotheism are not different and successive stages of one line of evolution, following the same direction. They are lines of different lengths, moving in different directions, though springing from a common centre—the soul of man. It is because they have a common centre that man, whichever line he has followed, can fall back upon it and start afresh.'[3] Evolutionary thinkers, when they are applying their theory to morality and religion, are apt to forget not only the real method of natural evolution, but also that they are dealing with man's *soul*, which is open to the creative, renewing, and

[1] *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. v. p. 628.
[2] F. B. Jevons, *The Idea of God in Early Religions*, p. 150.
[3] Ibid. p. 156.

inspiring fellowship of the Spirit of God. Evolution has proceeded along many lines. Streams which gave promise of fertilizing power have dried up in the desert. Man has, at infinite cost, blazed out tracks which have only led him deeper into the jungle, and with an enlarged experience he has had to return to his starting-point, his soul, which hungers and thirsts for the living God. The evolution of religion tells of new beginnings, of new in-rushes of divine life and energy and of new manifestations of creative and recreative activity. Close as is Christianity's connexion with Judaism, the former is not to be regarded as a mere development of the latter. It called man back to the starting-point, wiser from the experience gained along many paths, and sent him forth on a new and more fruitful line of development. It constituted a fresh beginning due to the emergence of a transcendent and redemptive Personality, not to be explained by evolutionary categories—' God manifest in the flesh.' Any application of the theory of Evolution to morality and religion which shuts us up in a closed universe is false both to history and experience. While it is true that the present grows out of the past, and the future out of the present, it is not merely by a process of natural development, but by the response of God to the cry of human need.

III

Limits of space permit only the barest possible discussion of the relation of present-day philosophical tendencies to the Christian Faith. As has already been indicated, religion cannot ignore philosophy, but must endeavour to come to an understanding with it. This does not mean that

religion must tender an unquestioning submission to philosophy; the two must confer on equal terms. 'Religion is bound up with certain beliefs about the nature of things, and hence must always settle accounts with the body of beliefs about the world which men derive from other sources.' [1] Man's life is one, although we may divide it into compartments for purposes of thought. His religious experience interacts with all his other experience, and his knowledge of God with the whole body of his knowledge. Ritschl was right in making Christian experience the starting-point of his theology; but when he refused to bring the knowledge thus derived into relation with knowledge gained from other sources he isolated Christian truth, and so impoverished it and limited its dominion. Christianity owes a debt to philosophy because of the witness it has borne to the unity of all truth. The task which it has set itself has been the unification of knowledge, the weaving of all the strands of man's many-sided experience into one web of many but harmoniously blending colours. Christianity claims to interpret God's relation to the world. It is not sufficient, therefore, for it to vindicate itself in one particular sphere. Sooner or later it must justify itself in the light of the knowledge that comes from every other sphere. Otherwise its interpretation of the world is incomplete, and the force of its affirmations is weakened or destroyed by the negations of other departments of knowledge. Philosophy, as the unifier of the truth, is therefore the ally, not the foe, of Christianity. Furthermore, Christianity owes philosophy a debt, frequently unrecognized, because it has strenuously contended for freedom of thought. It has resisted restrictions placed

[1] *Foundations*, p. 426.

upon thought in the name of authority, and has stood for liberty of investigation in opposition to the paralysing tyranny of the dead hand. Philosophy has thus served to remind theology that truth is a living organism, not a closed system; and as a result theologians have recognized the rights of the reason to strive after a more and more adequate interpretation of a growing and widening Christian experience.

On the other hand, there have been tendencies in philosophy which have not been helpful to the Christian Faith. It has frequently relied too exclusively either on knowledge derived through the senses, or on the findings of the speculative intellect, and has discounted the significance and authority of the facts and realities of the Christian life. Consequently it has often led men either into the morass of naturalism and agnosticism, or into the arid desert of intellectualism—both regions where the religious life cannot flourish.

The chief characteristics of present-day philosophy are its spiritualism and anti-intellectualism. The upholders of a spiritualistic philosophy may fairly be said to have confuted naturalistic or mechanistic interpretations of the world. 'The impossibility of a complete mechanical system of the universe has been brought out in the work of Dr. James Ward,[1] and may perhaps be regarded as one of the few points that have been definitely established in metaphysical theory.'[2] Agnosticism, too, has been shown to be an untenable position. It is a useful reminder that both philosopher and theologian should cultivate a humble and reverent attitude to the truth, and that dogmatism is out of place in dealing with that which lies beyond

[1] *Naturalism and Agnosticism.*
[2] McKenzie, *Outlines of Metaphysics*, p. 117.

the limits of the verified. But thorough-going agnosticism is self-contradictory. Even to assert that reality is unknowable is to imply some knowledge of it.

The speculative Idealism of Hegel has found many exponents in this country, some of whom have sought to interpret Christianity in its terms. This philosophy interprets the world in terms of spirit, and sees in the cosmic process the self-realization of an eternal principle of reason immanent within it. But Christian Theology finds in it certain fundamental difficulties, or, at the least, perils. Despite the best efforts of some of its exponents, it has shown an incurable drift towards a pantheism in which the line of demarcation between Divine and human personality is obliterated, and in which evil is regarded as a necessary factor in man's self-realization. Moreover, the Idealists are too intellectualistic in their methods, and not sufficiently in touch with experience. So much is this the case that they are apt to sublimate the facts of the gospel into mere abstractions of thought. The Incarnation, for instance, is regarded not as an historical fact of stupendous import, but as an expression of the unity of God and man.

It is not surprising that this exaggerated intellectualism has evoked a revolt from more than one direction : e.g. in Pragmatism, which starts with human conditions and needs ; in the teaching of Bergson, who denies the final competence of the intellect in matters philosophical, and relies on an ultra-intellectual intuition ; and in that of Eucken, whose fundamental assumption is the activity of a transcendent Spiritual Life in man.

Pragmatism holds that the truth of an idea is determined by its workability. A belief which,

from the standpoint of human conditions and needs, works, is pragmatically true. The universe consists not so much of finished facts as of possibilities, in process of realization. There is no such thing as absolute truth. It is evident that this method can yield nothing more than a hypothetical theism. William James, its chief exponent, inclines to a Pluralism in which God is no longer sovereign, but the president of a republic, with strictly limited powers. It is true, as Ward [1] has shown, that Pluralism points beyond itself to theism—a theism in which 'there can be no talk of God as merely *primus inter pares*.' But this transition, when it is made, is achieved by methods other than those of Pragmatism.

The pragmatic method is fruitfully applied in so far as it helps us to realize that experience is the pathway to the knowledge of God. Speculation, even if it yield an assurance of His existence, cannot give us an intimate knowledge of His nature. This can only be won by experience. But, as a philosophy, Pragmatism is utterly inadequate, especially when judged from the Christian standpoint. There is a wide gulf between the Pluralism of Pragmatism and the Christian conception of God as the one Father of spirits, the one Source of goodness, and the one Refuge of humanity. So long as man is conscious of the resistless power of his spiritual nature, he can be satisfied with no interpretation of life which does not seek to discover the fundamental nature of things, and which does not strive after the solution of ultimate problems. If the truth of a belief depends on its workability, we are entitled to ask, 'What is the standard of workability?' And it is difficult to see where this standard is to come from

[1] *The Realm of Ends*, ch. xi.

on purely pragmatic principles. Finally, Pragmatism may easily be used to justify intellectual indolence, and an obstinate adherence to obsolete views, involving disloyalty to the Spirit of Truth. Obscurantism might thus be justified on the ground of the piety of many of its adherents. Workability cannot be judged from a narrow span of time. That a belief appears to work does not prove that it is wholly true, but only that it has in it some elements of truth, which cannot fail to bring forth fruit.

Bergson denies the final competence of the intellect in philosophy, on the ground that its outlook has been shaped by practical needs. Scientific knowledge, valuable as it is, is different in kind from philosophic knowledge, which, by an act of discerning sympathy, attains to supra-intellectual intuition and apprehends reality as life. But intuition is not independent of intelligence; they interact. Intuition is not a substitute for intellectual travail, but its reward. 'Though it [intuition] transcends intelligence, it is from intelligence that has come the push that has made it rise to the point it has reached.' [1] 'It is impossible to have an intuition of reality—that is, an intellectual sympathy with its innermost nature—unless its confidence has been won by a long comradeship with its external manifestations.' [2] The intuition which Bergson has in mind is therefore metaphysical, and is not the prerogative of those who are philosophically 'babes.' Until he has developed his religious philosophy, it is impossible to tell what is his attitude to intuition in the religious sense. For the present it is suffi-

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 187.

[2] *Introduction to Metaphysic*, p. 67, quoted by A. D. Lindsay in *The Philosophy of Bergson*, p. 237.

cient to point out that it is premature to assume that because Bergson believes that an intuitional plunge into reality may follow on a long course of intellectual discipline, his philosophy will yield support to belief in the reality of the intuitions of the religious man. Not that these latter intuitions are independent of intelligence. They need intellectual concepts for their expression. But they are the fruit of spiritual communion, rather than of intellectual wrestling, however sympathetic, with spiritual truth ; and they are 'revealed unto babes.' Nevertheless, Bergson's witness is valuable as showing the inadequacy of mere intelligence for the apprehension of reality.

Eucken has called his philosophy Activism. He postulates in man the activity of a Spiritual Life, which has a reality and independence of its own, which 'applies its standards to the sifting of the whole content of our human life,' and which makes spiritually fruitful the lives of those in whom its activity is allowed free course. 'Action is the true spiritual "fact," the vital synthesis in which the opposition between subject and object is transcended by the realization of the redeeming Omnipresence.' [1] Eucken compares Activism with Pragmatism. 'Its affinity with Pragmatism is that it also sees the key to truth, not in intellectual inquiry, but in action. Its opposition to Pragmatism is its insistence upon the independent character of reality over against our experience of it. We do not bend it to our human needs and conditions ; it bends us to its standards and valuations.' [2] This Spiritual Life is redemptive ; it unifies and transforms our personalities, and 'holds before us a regenerated world in the light

[1] Hermann, *Eucken and Bergson*, p. 65.
[2] Ibid. p. 65.

of which it passes judgement on things as they are.' It cannot possibly be self-originated, demanding as it does toil and sacrifice and a revolution which shifts the very life-centre. It can only be explained on the assumption of the invasion of our life by a new order of reality.

It will be seen that there is much here that is reminiscent of Christian teaching. Eucken's philosophy undoubtedly offers a stimulating and helpful field of study to the Christian. But the points of likeness with Christianity are not so fundamental as might at first appear. Closer study shows that Eucken, like so many other philosophers, is more at home with the *ideas* than with the *facts* of the gospel. Philosophy can understand Immanence, but Incarnation is a stumbling-block to it. Immanence can be treated as an idea, universally realized to a greater or less degree. Incarnation is a unique fact, which cannot be sublimated into the realm of ideas and regarded as a mere expression of the unity of God and man, without emptying it of its significance as a supreme revelation of the Grace of God. Eucken refuses to admit that Christ exercises a unique function as the Mediator of the Spiritual Life. The dogma of Christ's deity, he says, has been the source of much confusion. Christ must be regarded as 'simply the high-water mark of a movement which embraces the whole of humanity.' Activism, therefore, assumes that man can redeem himself by spiritual action under the guidance and control of an immanent and redemptive Spiritual Life. It neither seeks nor finds in Christ a Saviour; only an Example. It is a lofty philosophy so far as it goes, but it does not embody the full Christianity of the New Testament.

These anti-intellectualistic, intuitional, and acti-

vistic movements of philosophy are of value as reminding us that the intellect is of itself insufficient for the apprehension of reality, and that the pathway to reality lies through spiritual action and experience. But experience must be interpreted in its widest sense. Account must be taken of all the facts and realities of the religious life ; and not only of interior relations, but of that great historical revelation of God in Jesus Christ which, as part of the warp and woof of history, is bound up inseparably with human experience in general, and more particularly with that of the Christian man. Historical facts must not be sublimated into intellectual ideas. Neither must the findings of the intellect be overlooked in an adequate interpretation of experience. The reason has its rights, and must not be robbed of them in the name of any pragmatic theory. Its claim to press on to the solution of ultimate problems under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth must be conceded ; its directive and selective functions must be allowed ; its demand to assess, correct, and unify the findings of experience must be recognized. The Christian argument from experience, as sometimes stated, is not free from peril. It lapses into a defence of subjective emotionalism and irrational mysticism, unless we bring the experience continually under the review of our reason as this is illumined by the Spirit of God, and at the same time keep steadily in mind its relation to the historic facts of the gospel.

But, even if our starting-point be the contents of experience, there is still danger of building up a purely intellectualistic or speculative theology. Everything depends on whether we have an outside or an inside view of experience, for it cannot be adequately interpreted from without, but only

from within. The crucial Christian experience of redemption, for instance, however sympathetically it may be approached, cannot be properly understood except by those who experience the saving power of Jesus Christ. The Christian theologian must be a Christian man, if his intellectual gifts and knowledge are to avail him in his interpretation of the gospel.

God is not an abstract idea, but a Person. He is therefore most truly known, not through the exercise of speculative thought, but in personal relations. In the transforming experience of His indwelling which is ours in Jesus Christ we reach reality, and know God as Light and Life and Love.

> The solution of the riddle of the universe is God;
> The solution of the riddle of God is Jesus Christ.[1]

[1] Raymond Brucker, quoted by Peake, *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament* (title-page).

XII

EVANGELISM AND SCHOLARSHIP

F. L. Wiseman, B.A.

Betwixt scholarship and evangelism is a grudge as ancient as any between Montague and Capulet —and as unreasonable. Yet it is not altogether inexplicable. We may perhaps trace its origin to the supposed incompatibility of reason and intuition, or to the still wider feud between custom and change, vested interest and reform. The possessor of a Koh-i-noor is apt to resent the office of one whose chief concern seems to be to reduce all diamonds to charcoal. The student who has given years of painful toil to the slow acquisition of learning cannot look with equanimity on the man who stoutly maintains that he possesses the philosopher's stone. So the Montague of learning becomes scornful of short cuts and insists on complete verification; while the Capulet of faith, confident in the 'strong commanding evidence' of his gospel's 'heavenly origin,' will brook no scepticism, nor give quarter to doubt.

Then from the house of exact scholarship springs a Romeo, and to the household of faith is born a Juliet. The twain feel that they were made for each other. What is to be done? Must the 'ancient grudge' claim fresh victims? or should we not rather hail the new signs, publish the banns, and with Wesley assist to—

> Unite the pair so long disjoined,
> Knowledge and vital piety?

Along with a multitude of others, the present writer is confident that such is the only course of wisdom. Indeed, he believes the union has already been effected, and that himself is a scion of the united houses. 'Tis true, he bears but little resemblance to either parent; but he honours his father and feels for him profound admiration, and loves his mother with growing passion, holding her to be the fairest among ten thousand. If he be told that the feud has now broken out afresh, that the parents can no longer live peaceably together, and that he must therefore make his choice of the one or the other—the scholar's methods and conclusions or the faith once delivered to the saints—he confesses to the stirring of Capulet blood and an irresistible impulse to live and die for the cause of his mother.

But no dilemma of that description confronts us. Indeed before any such issue could properly be raised we must have ascertained the ultimate facts of history and science and have learnt clearly to distinguish the essence of the faith from the form in which it is held. Accepted conclusions of science are being constantly modified by further research. On the other hand, certain positions once considered vital to the defence of the faith are seen to be relatively unimportant, so that to hold them in force shows ignorance of the real strategy of the campaign and may imperil its final success.

The gospel, indeed, has a line of witness apart from the Bible, and to that extent is indifferent to the modern attack upon the Bible. Of course the Scriptures are of inestimable value in teaching the things of the kingdom of God. They make us wise unto salvation. But they do not save. Salvation is in Christ alone. And the word of

reconciliation is committed to men. Faith cometh by hearing.

Long before the New Testament was written a great and increasing multitude were obedient to the faith. The modern Timothy likewise, though from a babe he has known the sacred writings, owes his experience of salvation to his mother, Eunice; and she believed because of the unfeigned faith which dwelt in her mother, Lois, and so on, step by step, right back to apostolic times. 'One generation shall laud Thy works unto another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts.'

In the Church, moreover, are the great remembrancers of redeeming love. We can never forget, 'As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come.' And, yet again, the Holy Spirit sets His seal in the heart of the believer upon the witness of word and symbol. Even, therefore, had Diocletian succeeded in his fell purpose of destroying every copy of the Scriptures, he would not have stamped out Christianity. He would still have had to break up every church and do to death every believer. 'The word of the Lord abideth for ever: and this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you.'

It may be replied, however, that while conceivably the gospel might continue to flourish without a Bible, yet so close is its connexion with the Scriptures that it could hardly survive their serious discrediting as 'the Scriptures of truth.' As, therefore, a general condition of doubt and unsettlement seems always to follow the employment of critical methods, the interests of evangelism appear to demand that the sacred book should not be subjected to such testing fires.

The merely curious should not be suffered to pry into the contents of the sacred ark.

But the evangelist himself cannot enter any such plea. Of all men in the world, he is pledged to the truth. He proclaims his gospel as the word of truth. The Spirit that accompanies the word is the Spirit of truth. The evangelist is a witness to fact. Accordingly, he desires to know the fact and to speak only in accordance therewith. If he is in error he would fain be corrected, for he cannot suppose that the truth of God will abound through his lie.

To search the Scriptures is therefore a duty; and to search under the best light, with well-trained eye, and after the most approved methods. Proceeding under such conditions, the explorer in the great continent of the Bible is not unlikely to discover much that had escaped the notice of his predecessors and to be led to form new opinions concerning its age and formation, its fauna and flora. In such a course, may we not say, our Lord Himself set the example. To the traditional interpretation of the Scripture which enjoyed an authority equal to that of the sacred books He attached no importance. He brushed all aside, and would read the original Scriptures with His own eye. And how astonishing to the men of that generation were the results which He brought to light! Circumcision, which every one said was given by Moses, Jesus showed was not of Moses, but of the fathers. In the Mosaic law of divorce, again, He found an instance of the accommodation of the law to the ethical ideas or capacity of the age which did not represent the original purpose of God. The rigidly literal interpretation of the Sabbath law which the prevalent doctrine of inspiration demanded He disallowed,

teaching that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Such illustrations clearly show, on the one hand, that our Lord recognized and taught the partial and progressive character of Old Testament revelation, and on the other that dissent from the general opinion as to its nature and content by no means implies a denial of its authority and may actually lead to a firmer hold on mind and conscience.

So, then, modern criticism should not be condemned simply because its methods are unfamiliar, nor its conclusions rejected because they seem to challenge a current doctrine of inspiration. They stand at truth's judgement-seat, where, and where alone, they ought to be judged. There they must expect to receive searching cross-examination; but to smite them for their testimony argues the heart of a coward or a sycophant rather than that of a zealot for the honour of the court. We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 'There is nothing hid save that it should be manifested, neither was anything made secret but that it should come to light.' In the last analysis, the severest scrutiny can only discover the facts as from the beginning the inspiring Spirit has known them. And the final doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Holy Writ must be consistent with those facts. Just in proportion, therefore, as our knowledge of the authorship, structure, and purport of the sacred books approaches to His knowledge of what they really are will the man of God grasp the true meaning and scope of their inspiration and be able to read them with profit for his perfecting unto every good work. And already we can discern certain directions in which he is greatly helped and his confidence

strengthened in the proclamation of the gospel. To cite a few examples :

1. *Moral Stratification.*—What geology has accomplished for the study of the earth's crust, historical criticism is doing for the structure of Scripture. It is familiarizing us with what we may call the moral stratification of Scripture. In other words, it directs attention to the progressive character of revelation. It does not expect to find in the older deposits so fully advanced moral ideals as are seen in the later. All the Word of God, it may be. But the Word of God to whom ? Surely not, save indirectly, to the reader two or three thousand years after it was written, but to the people of the time in which it was spoken. Each several part must be interpreted in the light of the customs and ideals of its age. The remark seems very obvious ; but what a difference the adoption of the principle has made in our attitude towards Old Testament revelation ! No longer is it necessary to defend the command of God to Saul to slaughter the Amalekites as though it were given to our own King George ; nor need a Christian feel under any obligation to justify the language of the imprecatory psalms or the commendation of the treacherous act of Jael. These belong to a more rudimentary period, and must be judged with reference to the standard of morality prevailing in their respective generations. There is growth in the knowledge of God, in moral perception, in moral ideal, until that which is perfect is come.

2. *The Import of Prophecy.*—More careful investigation into the part played by the prophet has given a new conception of his office and function. In the older books of Christian evidence the value of prophecy was understood to lie in its

explicit foretelling of far-distant events : so that, while miracles accredited the messenger of God to his own generation, prophecy was the sign for the ages to come. We are now taught that the prophet is rather God's witness to his own time, who speaks out of the fullness of his own heart as the Spirit gives him utterance. His clear insight into the needs of his own age gives to his words a significance for days far distant, and enables him to discern and to foreshadow God's purpose for the fullness of the times. But in the first instance the prophet's message is to his own day, and it is clothed in language, ideas, and imagery understanded of the people to whom it is addressed. So the date of the second part of Isaiah is no longer determined by the fact that the work is bound in the same volume with the writings of the great prophet of Judah. We are free to listen to the strong internal evidence that these incomparable discourses are from the pen of another prophet who lives amid the scenes in Babylon which he so vividly portrays, and who cherishes within his heart the high hope of a speedy loosing of the captive exile which he so exultingly sings. To read the book in the light of such explanation is like studying a country by means of a raised map after having been accustomed to an atlas 'on Mercator's projection.' It now presents a vivid and dramatic portrayal of captive Israel's spiritual experiences and hopes. It affords a convincing background for the grand and solitary figure of the Man of Sorrows, and suggests mysterious depths and far-reaching issues in the prophet's word.

Or, again, how welcome it is to learn that the utterances concerning the fate of the nations are not to be taken as a detailed prediction of the course which events will unalterably take (which,

in many instances, as a matter of fact they did not take), but are rather to be regarded as faithful warnings of a fate that inevitably follows on a continued course of rebellion against God's purpose, and of unrepentant disregard of the great principles of righteousness and truth—a teaching as valid to-day as when first spoken.

3. *Inspiration and Science.*—Scholarship draws attention to the true purpose of Scripture as the books themselves declare it, and makes clear the real character of the authority attaching to its narrative portions and references to nature. The Bible does not profess to be an encyclopaedia of all knowledge, whose word on every subject of which it speaks is to be regarded as final. The concern of the sacred writers is with moral and spiritual truth. So, then, we now can afford to smile at Luther's denunciation of Copernicus as an arrogant fool because, against the authority of Scripture, he presumed to maintain that the earth goes round the sun. We do not trouble to 'reconcile' statements of Scripture with facts of science at variance with them. The two move on altogether different planes. Differences in detail in various accounts of the same event which occasionally occur in both Old and New Testaments do not disturb us, and we feel little desire to harmonize them. The authors reflect the opinions and use the language of their age. As Luke shows us, they do their best to obtain correct information of the events of which they speak; but they are dependent on their sources. Indeed, when we see that, in the first two chapters of Genesis, there are two diverse accounts of the creation of the world, we may well conclude that the only theory of inspiration which can reflect the mind of the inspiring Spirit is one that allows

for the diversity and the occasional discrepancy in statement which the contents of the books plainly exhibit.

4. *The Teaching Value of Legend.*—Lastly, we may refer to recent insistence on the oriental complexion of Bible literature and the student's consequent obligation to read it in the light of the imaginative East, and not of the prosaic and matter-of-fact West. How many objections are removed, and how great the moral advantage gained, when once it is recognized that efforts of imagination—poetry, allegory, legend—which are the very breath of Eastern instruction, are sure to fill an important place in a collection of books originally written by Eastern men for Eastern eyes! Granted that the Holy Spirit knew that these books would be read by men of a different order of mind and might therefore be liable to be misunderstood, yet we must admit that, if He chooses an Eastern mind, it is an Eastern mind He wants. Far, then, from destroying its distinctive qualities, He will find in them just the channel He requires for the conveyance of His truth. Presuming, for example, that it were conclusively proved that the great figure standing at the head of the Hebrew nation is mythical—a supposition that requires, for acceptance, far more confirmation than it enjoys at present—one's profit in reading and confidence in expounding the lovely story is not lessened. Abraham will still be the father of the faithful, whose history is re-enacted in the spiritual experience of every one who enters upon the life of faith. All personal religion begins with a sense of a call, a call to depart and follow, a call that must be obeyed even though the fulfilment of the accompanying promise is long delayed.

Once grasp the idea that the book of Jonah is a story written with a purpose, a prose poem and not a biography, and you render harmless the opponent's witticisms about the whale, and quite needless the quest for sea-monsters existing, or now extinct, capable of performing the whale's feat. You are now free to concentrate attention on its quite startling missionary teaching, as powerful and timely to the Christian to-day as to the Jew of the time before Christ's coming. That the use of 'fiction' as a vehicle of truth is lawful our Lord's use of parable clearly shows. In outward form the story of the Prodigal Son, for instance, reads as though it were the recital of facts. But how jejune the criticism which on that ground demanded that there must have been a specific family whose experience our Lord was relating! The story in its essential particulars is true to universal experience. Read it at an open-air service, and you will probably become aware that the Prodigal Son is there in the crowd.

It is clear, then, that the evangelist has much reason to be thankful to the scholar for showing him the proper standpoint from which to regard the Scripture. But he feels no obligation to accept every new theory as proven. Scholars share with all mortals a predilection for their own offspring. They are always exposed to the temptation to make the facts fit their theory rather than the theory fit the facts. Some succumb to the temptation. The evangelist must prove all things; he is bound to listen. His obligation, however, is not to the voice of speculation, but to that of truth.

Especially does he need to be on his guard against the findings of a school which comes to the study of the gospel with a prepossession against the

supernatural. To him, the facts of religious experience are at least as real as material phenomena, and they confirm the teaching of Scripture that with God all things are possible. Objection to the authenticity of a narrative, therefore, merely on the ground that it contains miraculous elements, does not carry conviction. Remarkable answers to prayer, and startling conversions of abandoned men and women to a life of purity, uprightness, and love are too frequent in the experience of any missioner to permit him to doubt the truth of the converts' oft-repeated declaration that 'miracles still happen.'

While in his own study using the methods and assimilating the results of the best and wisest scholarship of the time, the evangelist must ever bear in mind that his business is not to impart the results of learning, but to preach the gospel. He will not be so unwise as to draw off the attention of his congregation from his main purpose or risk the loss of unity of feeling by dilating on critical methods and conclusions. The phrase 'higher criticism' is unfortunate and constantly misunderstood; so obnoxious is it to some that its use had better be altogether avoided. But the truth will be presented constructively and positively in such way that those who are accustomed to the principles of historical criticism will recognize the preacher's appreciation of their point of view, while the faith of the unlearned will be strengthened.

But the elder among us should not forget that by far the larger number of the evangelist's congregation belong in thought and feeling to a new age to which the historical method of inquiry is familiar. A lover of music, brought up in the best traditions of the classical period, and somewhat

hesitant about modern developments, said the other day that he had been reassured as to the future of music when he discovered from the improvisations of his son—a lad in his teens—that the boy's musical soul showed itself at home amid tonality and harmonies wherein he himself walked as a stranger and a pilgrim. So is it with the modern interpretation of Scripture. The passing generation, brought up in an older school, fears that if the principles of higher criticism prevail there will be no gospel left for the coming age to hear. But those very children are insensible of the difficulty of the new methods of treatment. Indeed, it is by means of them that they are best able to express their own firm faith that Jesus is Lord.

Let not the coming generation be impatient of the conservative leanings of their fathers. And let the elders be of good courage concerning the younger. 'Your children, whom ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in and they shall inherit the land.' To different harmonies they sing the eternal song:

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME
YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY,
YEA, AND FOR EVER!

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